

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE  
OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

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to have been maintained in Latin. Old Beardie died in a house, still standing, at the north-east entrance to the Churchyard of Kelso.

He left three sons. The eldest, Walter, had a family, of which any that now remain have been long settled in America: the male-heirs are long since extinct. The third was William, father of James Scott, well known in India as one of the original settlers of Prince of Wales's Island: he had, besides, a numerous family both of sons and daughters, and died at Lasswade, in Mid-Lothian.

The second, Robert Scott, was my grandfather. He was originally bred to the sea; but, being shipwrecked near Dundee in his trial voyage, he took such a sincere dislike to that element that he could not be persuaded to a second attempt. This occasioned a quarrel between him and his father, who left him to shift for himself. Robert was one of those active spirits to whom this was no misfortune. He turned Whig upon the spot, and fairly abjured his father's politics and his learned poverty. His chief and relative, Mr. Scott of Harden, gave him a lease of the farm of Sandy-Knowe, comprehending the rocks in the centre of which Smailholm or Sandy-Knowe Tower is situated. He took for his shepherd an old man, called Hogg, who willingly lent him, out of respect to his family, his whole savings, about £30, to stock the new farm. With this sum, which it seems was at the time sufficient for the purpose, the master and servant set off to purchase a stock of sheep at Whitsun-Trusty, a fair held on a hill near Wooler in Northumberland. The old shepherd went carefully from drove to drove, till he found a *hirsels* likely to answer their purpose, and then returned to tell his master to come up and conclude the bargain. But what was his surprise to see him galloping a mettled hunter about the race-course, and to find he had expended the whole stock in this extraordinary purchase!—Moses's bargain of green spectacles did not strike more dismay into the Vicar of Wakefield's family than my grandfather's rashness into the poor old shepherd. The thing, however, was irretrievable, and they returned without the sheep. In the course of a few days, however, my grandfather, who was one of the best horsemen of his time, attended John Scott of Harden's hounds on this same horse, and displayed him to such advantage that he sold him for double the original price. The farm was now stocked in earnest; and the rest of my grandfather's career was that of successful industry. He was one of the first who were active in the cattle trade, afterwards carried to such extent between the Highlands of Scotland and the leading counties in England, and by his droving transactions acquired a considerable sum of money. He was a man of middle stature, extremely active, quick, keen, and fiery in his temper, stubbornly honest, and so distinguished for his skill in country matters, that he was the general referee in all points of dispute which occurred in the neighbourhood. His birth being admitted as *gentle*, gave him access to the best society in the county, and his dexterity in country sports, particularly hunting, made him an acceptable companion in the field as well as at the table.\*

Robert Scott, of Sandy-Knowe, married in 1728, Barbara Haliburton,

\* The present Lord Haddington, and other gentlemen conversant with the south country, remember my grandfather well. He was a fine alert figure, and wore a jockey cap over his grey hair.—[1826].

daughter of Thomas Haliburton, of Newmains, an ancient and respectable family in Berwickshire. Among other patrimonial possessions, they enjoyed the part of Dryburgh, now the property of the Earl of Buchan, comprehending the ruins of the Abbey. My granduncle, Robert Haliburton, having no male heirs, this estate, as well as the representation of the family, would have devolved upon my father, and, indeed, Old Newmains had settled it upon him; but this was prevented by the misfortunes of my granduncle, a weak, silly man, who engaged in trade, for which he had neither stock nor talents, and became bankrupt. The ancient patrimony was sold for a trifle (about £3,000), and my father, who might have purchased it with ease, was dissuaded by my grandfather, who at that time believed a more advantageous purchase might have been made of some lands which Raeburn thought of selling. And thus we have nothing left of Dryburgh, although my father's maternal inheritance, but the right of stretching our bones where mine may perhaps be laid ere any eye but my own glances over these pages.

Walter Scott, my father, was born in 1729, and educated to the profession of a Writer to the Signet. He was the eldest of a large family, several of whom I shall have occasion to mention with a tribute of sincere gratitude. My father was a singular instance of a man rising to eminence in the profession for which nature had in some degree unfitted him. He had indeed a turn for labour, and a pleasure in analysing the abstruse feudal doctrines connected with conveyancing, which would probably have rendered him unrivalled in the line of a special pleader, had there been such a profession in Scotland; but in the actual business of the profession which he embraced, in that sharp and intuitive perception which is necessary in driving bargains for himself and others, in availing himself of the wants, necessities, caprices, and follies of some, and guarding against the knavery and malice of others, Uncle Toby himself could not have conducted himself with more simplicity than my father. Most attorneys have been suspected, more or less justly, of making their own fortune at the expense of their clients, my father's fate was to vindicate his calling from the stain in one instance, for in many cases his clients contrived to ease him of considerable sums. Many worshipful and be-knighted names occur to my memory, who did him the honour to run in his debt to the amount of thousands, and to pay him with a lawsuit, or a commission of bankruptcy, as the case happened. But they are gone to a different accounting, and it would be ungenerous to visit their disgrace upon their descendants. My father was wont also to give openings to those who were pleased to take them, to pick a quarrel with him. He had a zeal for his clients which was almost ludicrous; far from coldly discharging the duties of his employment towards them, he thought for them, felt for their honour as for his own, and rather risked disobliging them than neglecting anything to which he conceived their duty bound them. If there was an old mother or aunt to be maintained, he was, I am afraid, too apt to administer to their necessities from what the young heir had destined exclusively to his pleasures. This ready discharge of obligations which the *Q'rilians* tell us are only natural and not legal, did not, I fear, recommend him to his employers. Yet his practice was, at one period of his life, very extensive. He understood his business theoretically, and was

# MEMOIRS

## OF THE

### LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

*Ashestiel, April 26th, 1808.*

THE present age has discovered a desire, or rather a rage, for literary anecdote and private history, that may be well permitted to alarm one who has engaged in a certain degree the attention of the public. That I have had more than my own share of popularity, my contemporaries will be as ready to admit, as I am to confess that its measure has exceeded not only my hopes, but my merits, and even wishes. I may be therefore permitted, without an extraordinary degree of vanity, to take the precaution of recording a few leading circumstances (they do not merit the name of events) of a very quiet and uniform life—that, should my literary reputation survive my temporal existence, the public may know from good authority all that they are entitled to know of an individual who has contributed to their amusement.

From the lives of some poets a most important moral lesson may doubtless be derived, and few sermons can be read with so much profit as the Memoirs of Burns, of Chatterton, or of Savage. Were I conscious of anything peculiar in my own moral character which could render such development necessary or useful, I would as readily consent to it as I would bequeath my body to dissection, if the operation could tend to point out the nature and the means of curing any peculiar malady. But as my habits of thinking and acting, as well as my rank in society, were fixed long before I had attained, or even pretended to, any poetical reputation,\* and as it produced, when acquired, no remarkable change

\* I do not mean to say that my success in literature has not led me to mix familiarly in society much above my birth and original pretensions, since I have been readily received in the first circles in Britain. But there is a certain intuitive knowledge of the world to which most well-educated Scotchmen are early trained, that prevents them from being much dazzled by this species of elevation. A man who to good-nature adds the general rudiments of good breeding, provided he rest contented with a simple and unaffected manner of behaving and expressing himself, will never be ridiculous in the best society, and so far as his talents and informa-

upon either, it is hardly to be expected that much information can be derived from minutely investigating frailties, follies, or vices, not very different in number or degree from those of other men in my situation. As I have not been blessed with the talents of Burns or Chatterton, I have been happily exempted from the influence of their violent passions, exasperated by the struggle of feelings which rose up against the unjust decrees of fortune. Yet, although I cannot tell of difficulties vanquished and distance of rank annihilated by the strength of genius, those who shall hereafter read this little Memoir may find in it some hints to be improved, for the regulation of their own minds or the training those of others.

Every Scottishman has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative as unalienable as his pride and his poverty. My birth was neither distinguished nor sordid. According to the prejudices of my country, it was esteemed *gentle*, as I was connected, though remotely, with ancient families both by my father's and mother's side. My father's grandfather was Walter Scott, well known in Teviotdale by the surname of *Beardie*. He was the second son of Walter Scott, first Laird of Raeburn, who was third son of Sir William Scott, and the grandson of Walter Scott, commonly called in tradition *Auld Watt*, of Harden. I am therefore lineally descended from that ancient chieftain, whose name I have made to ring in many a ditty, and from his fair dame, the Flower of Yarrow—no bad genealogy for a Border minstrel. *Beardie*, my great-grandfather aforesaid, derived his cognomen from a venerable beard, which he wore unblemished by razor or scissors, in token of his regret for the banished dynasty of Stuart. It would have been well that his zeal had stopped there. But he took arms, and intrigued in their cause, until he lost all he had in the world, and, as I have heard, run a narrow risk of being hanged, had it not been for the interference of Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth. *Beardie's* elder brother, William Scott of Raeburn, my great-granduncle, was killed about the age of twenty-one, in a duel with Pringle of Crichton, grandfather of the present Mark Pringle of Clifton. They fought with swords, as was the fashion of the time, in a field near Selkirk, called from the catastrophe the *Raeburn Meadow-spot*. Pringle fled from Scotland to Spain, and was long a captive and slave in Barbary. *Beardie* became, of course, *Tutor of Raeburn*, as the old Scottish phrase called him, that is, guardian to his infant nephew, father of the present Walter Scott of Raeburn. He also managed the estates of Makerstoun, being nearly related to that family by his mother, Barbara MacDougal. I suppose he had some allowance for his care in either case, and subsisted upon that and the fortune which he had by his wife, a Miss Campbell of Silvercraigs, in the west, through which connexion my father used to *call cousin*, as they say, with the Campbells of Blythswood. *Beardie* was a man of some learning, and a friend of Dr. Pitcairn, to whom his politics probably made him acceptable. They had a Tory or Jacobite club in Edinburgh, in which the conversation is said

tion permit, may be an agreeable part of the company. I have, therefore, never felt much elevated, nor did I experience any violent change in situation by the passport which my poetical character afforded me into higher company than my birth warranted. —[1826.]

early introduced to it by a partnership with George Chalmers, Writer to the Signet, under whom he had served his apprenticeship.

His person and face were uncommonly handsome, with an expression of sweetness of temper, which was not fallacious; his manners were rather formal, but full of genuine kindness, especially when exercising the duties of hospitality. His general habits were not only temperate, but severely abstemious; but upon a festival occasion there were few whom a moderate glass of wine exhilarated to such a lively degree. His religion, in which he was devoutly sincere, was Calvinism of the strictest kind, and his favourite study related to Church history. I suspect the good old man was often engaged with Knox and Spottiswoode's folios, when, immured in his solitary room, he was supposed to be immersed in professional researches. In his political principles, he was a steady friend to freedom, with a bias, however, to the monarchical part of our constitution, which he considered as peculiarly exposed to danger during the later years of his life. He had much of ancient Scottish prejudice respecting the forms of marriages, funerals, christenings, and so forth, and was always vexed at any neglect of etiquette upon such occasions. As his education had not been upon an enlarged plan, it could not be expected that he should be an enlightened scholar, but he had not passed through a busy life without observation, and his remarks upon times and manners often exhibited strong traits of practical though untaught philosophy. Let me conclude this sketch, which I am unconscious of having overcharged, with a few lines written by the late Mrs. Cockburn \* upon the subject. They made one among a set of poetical characters which were given as toasts among a few friends, and we must hold them to contain a striking likeness, since the original was recognized so soon as they were read aloud.

"To a thing that's uncommon—  
A youth of discretion,  
Who, though vastly handsome,  
Despises flirtation;  
To the friend in affliction,  
The heart of affection,  
Who may hear the last trump  
Without dread of detection."

In [April, 1758] my father married Anne Rutherford, eldest daughter of Dr. John Rutherford, professor of medicine in the University of Edinburgh. He was one of those pupils of Boerhaave to whom the school of medicine in our northern metropolis owes its rise, and a man distinguished for professional talent, for lively wit, and for literary acquirements. Dr. Rutherford was twice married. His first wife, of whom my mother is the sole surviving child, was a daughter of Sir John Swinton of Swinton, a family which produced many distinguished warriors during the middle ages, and which, for antiquity and honourable alliances, may rank with any in Britain. My grandfather's second wife was Miss

\* Mrs. Cockburn (born Miss Rutherford of Fairnlie) was the authoress of the beautiful song—

"I have seen the smiling  
Of fortune beguiling."—[1826.]

at a later period an odd volume of Josephus's Wars of the Jews divided my partiality.

My kind and affectionate aunt, Miss Janet Scott, whose memory will ever be dear to me, used to read these works to me with admirable patience, until I could repeat long passages by heart. The ballad of Hardyknute I was early master of, to the great annoyance of almost our only visitor, the worthy clergyman of the parish, Dr. Duncan, who had not patience to have a sober chat interrupted by my shouting forth this ditty. Methinks I now see his tall thin emaciated figure, his legs cased in clasped gambadoes, and his face of a length that would have rivalled the Knight of La Mancha's, and hear him exclaiming, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is." With this little acidity, which was natural to him, he was a most excellent and benevolent man, a gentleman in every feeling, and altogether different from those of his order who cringe at the tables of the gentry, or domineer and riot at those of the yeomanry. In his youth he had been chaplain in the family of Lord Marchmont—had seen Pope—and could talk familiarly of many characters who had survived the Augustan age of Queen Anne. Though valetudinary, he lived to be nearly ninety, and to welcome to Scotland his son, Colonel William Duncan, who, with the highest character for military and civil merit, had made a considerable fortune in India. In [1795], a few days before his death, I paid him a visit, to enquire after his health. I found him emaciated to the last degree, wrapped in a tartan nightgown, and employed with all the activity of health and youth in correcting a History of the Revolution, which he intended should be given to the public when he was no more. He read me several passages with a voice naturally strong, and which the feelings of an author then raised above the depression of age and declining health. I begged him to spare this fatigue, which could not but injure his health. His answer was remarkable. "I know," he said, "that I cannot survive a fortnight—and what signifies an exertion that can at worst only accelerate my death a few days?" I marvelled at the composure of this reply, for his appearance sufficiently vouched the truth of his prophecy, and rode home to my uncle's (then my abode), musing what there could be in the spirit of authorship that could inspire its votaries with the courage of martyrs. He died within less than the period he assigned—with which event I close my digression.

I was in my fourth year when my father was advised that the Bath waters might be of some advantage to my lameness. My affectionate aunt, although such a journey promised to a person of her retired habits anything but pleasure or amusement, undertook as readily to accompany me to the wells of Bladud, as if she had expected all the delight that ever the prospect of a watering-place held out to its most impatient visitants. My health was by this time a good deal confirmed by the country air, and the influence of that imperceptible and unfatiguing exercise to which the good sense of my grandfather had subjected me; for when the day was fine, I was usually carried out and laid down beside the old shepherd, among the crags or rocks round which he fed his sheep. The impatience of a child soon inclined me to struggle with my infirmity, and I began by degrees to stand, to walk, and to run. Although the limb affect-

was much shrunk and contracted, my general health, which was of more importance, was much strengthened by being frequently in the open air, and, *sine* word, I who in a city had probably been condemned to hopeless and helpless decrepitude, was now a healthy, high-spirited, and, my lameness apart, a sturdy child—*non sine diis animosus infans*.

We went to London by sea, and it may gratify the curiosity of minute biographers to learn, that our voyage was performed in the Duchess of Buccleuch, Captain Beatson, master. At London we made a short stay, and saw some of the common shows exhibited to strangers. When, twenty-five years afterwards, I visited the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, I was astonished to find how accurate my recollections of these celebrated places of visitation proved to be, and I have ever since trusted more implicitly to my juvenile reminiscences. At Bath, where I lived about a year, I went through all the usual discipline of the pump-room and baths, but I believe without the least advantage to my lameness. - During my residence at Bath, I acquired the rudiments of reading at a day-school, kept by an old dame near our lodgings, and I had never a more regular teacher, although I think I did not attend her a quarter of a year. An occasional lesson from my aunt supplied the rest. Afterwards, when grown a big boy, I had a few lessons from Mr. Stalker, of Edinburgh, and finally from the Rev. Mr. Clure. But I never acquired a just pronunciation, nor could I read with much propriety.

In other respects my residence at Bath is marked by very pleasing recollections. The venerable John Home, author of Douglas, was then at the watering-place, and paid much attention to my aunt and to me. His wife, who has survived him, was then an invalid, and used to take the air in her carriage on the Downs, when I was often invited to accompany her. But the most delightful recollections of Bath are dated after the arrival of my uncle, Captain Robert Scott, who introduced me to all the little amusements which suited my age, and, above all, to the theatre. The play was "As You Like It;" and the witchery of the whole scene is alive in my mind at this moment. I made, I believe, noise more than enough, and remember being so much scandalized at the quarrel between Orlando and his brother in the first scene that I screamed out, "Ain't they brothers?" A few weeks' residence at home convinced me, who had till then been an only child in the house of my grandfather, that a quarrel between brothers was a very natural event.

The other circumstances I recollect of my residence in Bath are but trifling, yet I never recall them without a feeling of pleasure. The beauties of the parade (which of them I know not), with the river Avon winding around it, and the lowing of the cattle from the opposite hills, are warm in my recollection, and are only rivalled by the splendours of a toy-shop somewhere near the Orange Grove. I had acquired, I know not by what means, a kind of superstitious terror for statuary of all kinds. No ancient Iconoclast or modern Calvinist could have looked on the outside of the abbey church (if I mistake not, the principal church at Bath is so called) with more horror than the image of Jacob's Ladder, with all its angels, presented to my infant eye. My uncle effectually combated my terrors, and formally introduced me to a statue of Neptune, which perhaps still

keeps guard at the side of the Avon, where a pleasure boat crosses to, Spring Gardens.

After being a year at Bath, I returned first to Edinburgh, and afterwards for a season to Sandy-Knowe;—and thus the time whiled away till about my eighth year, when it was thought sea-bathing might be of service to my lameness.

For this purpose, still under my aunt's protection, I remained some weeks at Prestonpans, a circumstance not worth mentioning, excepting to record my juvenile intimacy with an old military veteran, Dalgetty by name, who had pitched his tent in that little village, after all his campaigns subsisting upon an ensign's half-pay, though called by courtesy a Captain. As this old gentleman, who had been in all the German wars, found very few to listen to his tales of military feats, he formed a sort of alliance with me, and I used invariably to attend him for the pleasure of hearing those communications. Sometimes our conversation turned on the American War, which was then raging. It was about the time of Burgoyne's unfortunate expedition, to which my Captain and I augured different conclusions. Somebody had showed me a map of North America, and, struck with the rugged appearance of the country, and the quantity of lakes, I expressed some doubts on the subject of the General's arriving safely at the end of his journey, which were very indignantly refuted by the Captain. The news of the Saratoga disaster, while it gave me a little triumph, rather shook my intimacy with the veteran.\*

\* Besides this veteran, I found another ally at Prestonpans, in the person of George Constable, an old friend of my father's, educated to the law, but retired upon his independent property, and generally residing near Dundee. He had many of those peculiarities of temper which long afterwards I tried to develop in the character of Jonathan Oldbuck. It is very odd, that though I am unconscious of anything in which I strictly copied the *manners* of my old friend, the resemblance was nevertheless detected by George Chalmers, Esq., solicitor, London, an old friend both of my father and Mr. Constable, and who affirmed to my late friend, Lord Kinnedder, that I must needs be the author of the *Antiquary*, since he recognized the portrait of George Constable. But my friend George was not so decided an enemy to womanhood as his representative Monkbarrow. On the contrary, I rather suspect that he had a *tendresse* for my Aunt Jenny, who even then was a most beautiful woman, though somewhat advanced in life. To the close of her life she had the finest eyes and teeth I ever saw, and though she could be sufficiently sharp when she had a mind, her general behaviour was genteel and ladylike. However this might be, I derived a great deal of curious information from George Constable, both at this early period and afterwards. He was constantly philandering about my aunt, and of course very kind to me. He was the first person who told me about Falstaff and Hotspur, and other characters in Shakspeare. What idea I annexed to them I know not, but I must have annexed some, for I remember quite well being interested on the subject. Indeed, I rather suspect that children derive impulses of a powerful and important kind in hearing things which they cannot entirely comprehend; and therefore, that to write *down* to children's understanding is a mistake; set them on the scent, and let them puzzle it out. To return to George Constable, I knew him well at a much later period. He used always to dine at my father's house of a Sunday, and was authorized to turn the conversation out of the austere and Calvinistic tone, which it usually maintained on that day, upon subjects of history or auld langsyne. He remembered the Forty-five, and told many excellent stories, all with a strong dash of peculiar caustic humour.

From Prestonpans I was transported back to my father's house in George's Square, which continued to be my most established place of residence until my marriage in 1797. I felt the change from being a single indulged brat, to becoming a member of a large family, very severely; for under the gentle government of my kind grandmother, who was meekness itself, and of my aunt, who, though of an higher temper, was exceedingly attached to me, I had acquired a degree of license which could not be permitted in a large family. I had sense enough, however, to bend my temper to my new circumstances; but such was the agony which I internally experienced, that I have guarded against nothing more in the education of my own family than against their acquiring habits of self-willed caprice and domination. I found much consolation during this period of mortification in the partiality of my mother. She joined to a light and happy temper of mind a strong turn to study poetry and works of imagination. She was sincerely devout, but her religion was, as became her sex, of a cast less austere than my father's. Still, the discipline of the Presbyterian Sabbath was severely strict, and I think injudiciously so. Although Bunyan's Pilgrim, Gesner's Death of Abel, Rowe's Letters, and one or two other books, which, for that reason, I still have a favour for, were admitted to relieve the gloom of one dull sermon succeeding to another—there was far too much tedium annexed to the duties of the day; and in the end it did none of us any good.

My week-day tasks were more agreeable. My lameness and my solitary habits had made me a tolerable reader, and my hours of leisure were usually spent in reading aloud to my mother Pope's translation of Homer, which, except a few traditionary ballads, and the songs in Allan Ramsay's Evergreen, was the first poetry which I perused. My mother had good natural taste and great feeling; she used to make me pause upon those passages which expressed generous and worthy sentiments, and if she could not divert me from those which were descriptive of battle and tumult, she contrived at least to divide my attention between them. My own enthusiasm, however, was chiefly awakened by the wonderful and the terrible—the common taste of children, but in which I have remained a child even unto this day. I got by heart, not as a task, but almost without intending it, the passages with which I was

George's sworn ally as a brother antiquary was John Davidson, then Keeper of the Signet; and I remember his flattering and compelling me to go to dine there. A Writer's apprentice with the Keeper of the Signet, whose least officer kept us in order! It was an awful event. Thither, however, I went with some secret expectation of a scantling of good claret. Mr. D. had a son whose taste inclined him to the army, to which his father, who had designed him for the bar, gave a most unwilling consent. He was at this time a young officer, and he and I, leaving the two seniors to proceed in their chat as they pleased, never once opened our mouths either to them or each other. The Pragmatic Sanction happened unfortunately to become the theme of their conversation, when Constable said in jest, "Now, John, I'll wad you a plack that neither of these two lads ever heard of the Pragmatic Sanction." "Not heard of the Pragmatic Sanction!" said John Davidson; "I would like to see that;" and with a voice of thunder he asked his son the fatal question. As young D. modestly allowed he knew nothing about it, his father drove him from the table in a rage, and I absconded during the confusion; nor could Constable ever bring me back again to his friend Davidson's.

most pleased, and used to recite them aloud, both when alone and to others—more willingly, however, in my hours of solitude, for I had observed some auditors smile, and I dreaded ridicule at that time of life more than I have ever done since.

In [1779] I was sent to the second class of the Grammar School, or High School of Edinburgh, then taught by Mr. Luke Fraser, a good Latin scholar and a very worthy man. Though I had received, with my brothers, in private, lessons of Latin from Mr. James French, now a minister of the Kirk of Scotland, I was nevertheless rather behind the class in which I was placed both in years and in progress. This was a real disadvantage, and one to which a boy of lively temper and talents ought to be as little exposed as one who might be less expected to make up his lee-way, as it is called. The situation has the unfortunate effect of reconciling a boy of the former character (which in a posthumous work I may claim for my own) to holding a subordinate station among his class-fellows, to which he would otherwise affix disgrace. There is also, from the constitution of the High School, a certain danger not sufficiently attended to. The boys take precedence in their *places*, as they are called, according to their merit, and it requires a long while, in general, before even a clever boy, if he falls behind the class, or is put into one for which he is not quite ready, can force his way to the situation which his abilities really entitle him to hold. But, in the meanwhile, he is necessarily led to be the associate and companion of those inferior spirits with whom he is placed; for the system of precedence, though it does not limit the general intercourse among the boys, has nevertheless the effect of throwing them into clubs and coteries, according to the vicinity of the seats they hold. A boy of good talents, therefore, placed, even for a time, among his inferiors, especially if they be also his elders, learns to participate in their pursuits and objects of ambition, which are usually very distinct from the acquisition of learning; and it will be well if he does not also imitate them in that indifference which is contented with bustling over a lesson, so as to avoid punishment, without affecting superiority, or aiming at reward. It was probably owing to this circumstance that, although at a more advanced period of life I have enjoyed considerable facility in acquiring languages, I did not make any great figure at the High School—or, at least, any exertions which I made were desultory and little to be depended on.

Our class contained some very excellent scholars. The first *Dux* was James Buchan, who retained his honoured place, almost without a day's interval, all the while we were at the High School. He was afterwards at the head of the medical staff in Egypt, and in exposing himself to the plague infection, by attending the hospitals there, displayed the same well-regulated and gentle, yet determined perseverance, which placed him most worthily at the head of his school-fellows, while many lads of livelier parts and dispositions held an inferior station. The next best scholars (*sed longo intervallo*) were my friend David Douglas, the heir and *heir* of the celebrated Adam Smith, and James Hope, now a Writer to the Signet, both since well known and distinguished in their department of the law. As for myself, I glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, and commonly disgusted my kind master

much by negligence and frivolity, as I occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent. Among my companions, my good-nature and a flow of ready imagination rendered me very popular. Boys are uncommonly just in their feelings, and at least equally generous. My lameness, and the efforts which I made to supply that disadvantage, by making up in address what I wanted in activity, engaged the latter principle in my favour; and in the winter play-hours, when hard exercise was impossible, my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Luckie Brown's fireside, and happy was he that could sit next to the inexhaustible narrator. I was also, though often negligent of my own task, always ready to assist my friends, and hence I had a little party of staunch partisans and adherents, stout of hand and heart, though somewhat dull of head, the very tools for raising a hero to eminence. So, on the whole, I made a brighter figure in the yards than in the class.\*

My father did not trust our education solely to our High School lessons. We had a tutor at home, a young man of excellent disposition, and a laborious student. He was bred to the Kirk, but unfortunately took such a very strong turn to fanaticism, that he afterwards resigned an excellent living in a seaport town, merely because he could not persuade the mariners of the guilt of setting sail of a Sabbath, in which, by-the-bye, he was less likely to be successful, as, *cæteris paribus*, sailors, from an opinion that it is a fortunate omen, always chose to weigh anchor on that day. The calibre of this young man's understanding may be judged of by this anecdote; but in other respects he was a faithful and active instructor; and from him chiefly I learned writing and arithmetic. I repeated to him my French lessons, and studied with him my themes in the classics, but not classically. I also acquired, by disputing with him, for this he readily permitted, some knowledge of school divinity and Church history, and a great acquaintance in particular with the old books describing the early history of the Church of Scotland, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters, and so forth. I, with a head on fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier; my friend was a Roundhead; I was a Tory, and he was a Whig. I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the dark politic Argyle; so that we never wanted subjects of dispute, but our disputes were always amicable. In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part, arising out of acquaintance with the views or principles of either party; nor had my antagonist address enough to turn the debate on such topics. I took up my politics at that period as King Charles II. did his religion, from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the ore gentlemanlike persuasion of the two.

After having been three years under Mr. Fraser, our class was, in the

\* I read not long since, in that authentic record called the *Percy Anecdotes*, that I had been educated at Musselburgh school, where I had been distinguished as an absolute dunce, only Dr. Blair, seeing farther into the millstone, had pronounced there was fire in it. I never was at Musselburgh school in my life, and though I have met Dr. Blair at my father's and elsewhere, I never had the good fortune to attract his notice, to my knowledge. Lastly, I was never a dunce, nor thought to be so, but an incorrigibly idle imbecile, who was always longing to do something else than what was enjoined him.—[18.]

usual routine of the school, turned over to Dr. Adam, the Rector. It was from this respectable man that I first learned the value of the knowledge I had hitherto considered only as a burdensome task. It was the fashion to remain two years at his class, where we read Cæsar, and Livy, and Sallust, in prose; Virgil, Horace, and Terence, in verse. I had by this time mastered, in some degree, the difficulties of the language, and began to be sensible of its beauties. This was really gathering grapes from thistles; nor shall I soon forget the swelling of my little pride when the Rector pronounced, that though many of my schoolfellows understood the Latin better, *Gualterus Scott* was behind few in following and enjoying the author's meaning. Thus encouraged, I distinguished myself by some attempts at poetical versions from Horace and Virgil. Dr. Adam used to invite his scholars to such essays, but never made them tasks. I gained some distinction upon these occasions, and the Rector in future took much notice of me, and his judicious mixture of censure and praise went far to counterbalance my habits of indolence and inattention. I saw I was expected to do well, and I was piqued in honour to vindicate my master's favourable opinion. I climbed, therefore, to the first form; and, though I never made a first-rate Latinist, my schoolfellows, and what was of more consequence, I myself, considered that I had a character for learning to aintain. Dr. Adam, to whom I owed so much, never failed to remind me of my obligations when I had made some figure in the literary world. He was, indeed, deeply imbued with that fortunate vanity which alone could induce a man who has arms to pare and burn a muir to submit to the yet more toilsome task of cultivating youth. As Catholics confide in the imputed righteousness of their saints, so did the good old doctor plume himself upon the success of his scholars in life, all of which he never failed (and often justly) to claim as the creation, or at least the fruits, of his early instructions. He remembered the fate of every boy at his school during the fifty years he had superintended it, and always traced their success or misfortunes entirely to their attention or negligence when under his care. His "noisy mansion," which to others would have been a melancholy bedlam, was the pride of his heart; and the only fatigues he felt, amidst din and tumult, and the necessity of reading themes, hearing lessons, and maintaining some degree of order at the same time, were relieved by comparing himself to Cæsar, who could dictate to three secretaries at once;—so ready is vanity to lighten the labours of duty.

It is a pity that a man so learned, so admirably adapted for his station, so useful, so simple, so easily contented, should have had other subjects of mortification. But the magistrates of Edinburgh, not knowing the treasure they possessed in Dr. Adam, encouraged a savage fellow, called Nicol, one of the under-masters, in insulting his person and authority. This man was an excellent classical scholar, and an admirable convivial humourist (which latter quality recommended him to the friendship of Burns); but worthless, drunken, and inhumanly cruel to the boys under his charge. He carried his feud against the Rector within an inch of assassination, for he waylaid and knocked him down in the dark. The favour which this worthless rival obtained in the town council led to other consequences, which for some time clouded poor Adam's happiness

and fair fame. When the French Revolution broke out, and parties ran high in approving or condemning it, the doctor incautiously joined the former. This was very natural, for as all his ideas of existing governments were derived from his experience of the town council of Edinburgh; it must be admitted they scarce brooked comparison with the free states of Rome and Greece, from which he borrowed his opinions concerning republics. His want of caution in speaking on the political topics of the day lost him the respect of the boys, most of whom were accustomed to hear very different opinions on those matters in the bosom of their families. This, however (which was long after my time), passed away with other heats of the period, and the doctor continued his labours till about a year since, when he was struck with palsy while teaching his class. He survived a few days, but becoming delirious before his dissolution, conceived he was still in school, and after some expressions of applause or censure, he said, "But it grows dark—the boys may dismiss"—and instantly expired.

From Dr. Adam's class I should, according to the usual routine, have proceeded immediately to college. But, fortunately, I was not yet to lose by a total dismission from constraint, the acquaintance with the Latin which I had acquired. My health had become rather delicate from rapid growth, and my father was easily persuaded to allow me to spend half a year at Kelso with my kind aunt, Miss Janet Scott, whose inmate I again became. It was hardly worth mentioning that I frequently visited her during our short vacations.

At this time she resided in a small house, situated very pleasantly in a large garden, to the eastward of the churchyard of Kelso, which extended down to the Tweed. It was then my father's property, from whom it was afterwards purchased by my uncle. My grandmother was now dead, and my aunt's only companion, besides an old maid-servant, was my cousin, Miss Barbara Scott, now Mrs. Meik. My time was here left entirely to my own disposal, excepting for about four hours in the day, when I was expected to attend the grammar school of the village. The teacher at that time was Mr. Lancelot Whale, an excellent classical scholar, a humourist, and a worthy man. He had a supreme antipathy to the puns which his very uncommon name frequently gave rise to; insomuch, that he made his son spell the word *Wale*, which only occasioned the young man being nicknamed *the Prince of Wales* by the military mess to which he belonged. As for Whale, senior, the least allusion to Jonah, or the terming him an odd fish, or any similar quibble, was sure to put him beside himself. In point of knowledge and taste, he was far too good for the situation he held, which only required that he should give his scholars a rough foundation in the Latin language. My time with him, though short, was spent greatly to my advantage and his gratification. He was glad to escape to Persius and Tacitus from the eternal Rudiments and Cornelius Nepos; and as perusing these authors with one who began to understand them was to him a labour of love, I made considerable progress under his instructions. I suspect, indeed, that some of the time dedicated to me was withdrawn from the instruction of his more regular scholars; but I was as grateful as I could. I acted as usher, and heard the inferior classes, and I spouted the speech of Galgacus at the public

examination, which did not make the less impression on the audience that few of them probably understood one word of it.

In the meanwhile my acquaintance with English literature was gradually extending itself. In the intervals of my school hours I had always perused with avidity such books of history or poetry or voyages and travels as chance presented to me—not forgetting the usual, or rather ten times the usual, quantity of fairy tales, Eastern stories, romances, &c. These studies were totally unregulated and undirected. My tutor thought it almost a sin to open a profane play or poem; and my mother, besides that she might be in some degree trammelled by the religious scruples which he suggested, had no longer the opportunity to hear me read poetry as formerly. I found, however, in her dressing-room (where I slept at one time) some odd volumes of Shakspeare, nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sate up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock. Chance, however, threw in my way a poetical preceptor. This was no other than the excellent and benevolent Dr. Blacklock, well known at that time as a literary character. I know not how I attracted his attention, and that of some of the young men who boarded in his family; but so it was that I became a frequent and favoured guest. The kind old man opened to me the stores of his library, and through his recommendation I became intimate with Ossian and Spenser. I was delighted with both, yet I think chiefly with the latter poet. The tawdry repetitions of the Ossianic phraseology disgusted me rather sooner than might have been expected from my age. But Spenser I could have read for ever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society. As I had always a wonderful facility in retaining in my memory whatever verses pleased me, the quantity of Spenser's stanzas which I could repeat was really marvellous. But this memory of mine was a very fickle ally, and has through my whole life acted merely upon its own capricious motion, and might have enabled me to adopt old Beattie of Meikledale's answer, when complimented by a certain reverend divine on the strength of the same faculty:—"No, sir," answered the old Borderer, "I have no command of my memory. It only retains what hits my fancy, and probably, sir, if you were to preach to me for two hours, I would not be able when you finished to remember a word you had been saying." My memory was precisely of the same kind; it seldom failed to preserve most tenaciously a favourite passage of poetry, a playhouse ditty, or, above all, a Border-raid ballad; but names, dates, and the other technicalities of history escaped me in a most melancholy degree. The philosophy of history, a much more important subject, was also a sealed book at this period of my life; but I gradually assembled much of what was striking and picturesque in historical narrative; and when, in riper years, I attended more to the deduction of general principles, I was furnished with a powerful host of examples in illustration of them. I was, in short, like an ignorant gamester, who kept up a good hand until he knew how to play it.

I left the High School, therefore, with a great quantity of general information, ill arranged, indeed, and collected without system, yet deeply impressed upon my mind; readily assorted by my power of connection and memory, and gilded, if I may be permitted to say so, by a vivid and active imagination. If my studies were not under any direction at Edinburgh, in the country, it may be well imagined, they were less so. A respectable subscription library, a circulating library of ancient standing, and some private book-shelves, were open to my random perusal, and I waded into the stream like a blind man into a ford, without the power of searching my way, unless by groping for it. My appetite for books was as ample and indiscriminating as it was indefatigable, and I since have had too frequently reason to repent that few ever read so much, and to so little purpose.

Among the valuable acquisitions I made about this time was an acquaintance with Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, through the flat medium of Mr. Hoole's translation. But above all, I then first became acquainted with Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. As I had been from infancy devoted to legendary lore of this nature, and only reluctantly withdrew my attention, from the scarcity of materials and the rudeness of those which I possessed, it may be imagined, but cannot be described, with what delight I saw pieces of the same kind which had amused my childhood, and still continued in secret the Delilahs of my imagination, considered as the subject of sober research, grave commentary, and apt illustration, by an editor who showed his poetical genius was capable of emulating the best qualities of what his pious labour preserved. I remember well the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour in the garden I have mentioned. The summer day sped onward so fast, that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time, too, I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes, nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm. About this period also I became acquainted with the works of Richardson, and those of Mackenzie—(whom in later years I became entitled to call my friend)—with Fielding, Smollett, and some others of our best novelists.

To this period also I can trace distinctly the awaking of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never since deserted me. The neighbourhood of Kelso, the most beautiful, if not the most romantic village in Scotland, is eminently calculated to awaken these ideas. It presents objects, not only grand in themselves, but venerable from their association. The meeting of two superb rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, both renowned in song, the ruins of an ancient abbey, the more distant vestiges of Roxburgh Castle, the modern mansion of Fleurs, which is so situated as to combine the ideas of ancient baronial grandeur with

those of modern taste, are in themselves objects of the first class ; yet are so mixed, united, and melted among a thousand other beauties of a less prominent description, that they harmonize into one general picture, and please rather by unison than by concord. I believe I have written unintelligibly upon this subject, but it is fitter for the pencil than the pen. The romantic feelings which I have described as predominating in my mind, naturally rested upon and associated themselves with these grand features of the landscape around me ; and the historical incidents or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, I would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe.

I was recalled to Edinburgh about the time when the College meets, and put at once to the Humanity class, under Mr. Hill, and the first Greek class, taught by Mr. Dalzell. The former held the reins of discipline very loosely, and though beloved by his students, for he was a good-natured man, as well as a good scholar, he had not the art of exciting our attention as well as liking. This was a dangerous character with whom to trust one who relished labour as little as I did, and amid the riot of his class I speedily lost much of what I had learned under Adam and Whale. At the Greek class I might have made a better figure, for Professor Dalzell maintained a great deal of authority, and was not only himself an admirable scholar, but was always deeply interested in the progress of his students. But here lay the villany. Almost all my companions who had left the High School at the same time with myself, had acquired a smattering of Greek before they came to College. I, alas ! had none ; and finding myself far inferior to all my fellow-students, I could hit upon no better mode of vindicating my equality than by professing my contempt for the language, and my resolution not to learn it. A youth who died early, himself an excellent Greek scholar, saw my negligence and folly with pain, instead of contempt. He came to call on me in George's Square, and pointed out in the strongest terms the silliness of the conduct I had adopted, told me I was distinguished by the name of the *Greek Blockhead*, and exhorted me to redeem my reputation while it was called to-day. My stubborn pride received this advice with sulky civility ; the birth of my Mentor (whose name was Archibald, the son of an innkeeper) did not, as I thought in my folly, authorize him to intrude upon me his advice. The other was not sharp-sighted, or his consciousness of a generous intention overcame his resentment. He offered me his daily and nightly assistance, and pledged himself to bring me forward with the foremost of my class. I felt some twinges of conscience, but they were unable to prevail over my pride and self-conceit. The poor lad left me more in sorrow than in anger, nor did we ever meet again. All hopes of my progress in the Greek were now over ; inasmuch that when we were required to write essays on the authors we had studied, I had the audacity to produce a composition in which I weighed Homer against Ariosto, and pronounced him wanting in the balance. I supported

this heresy by a profusion of bad reading and flimsy argument. The wrath of the Professor was extreme, while at the same time he could not suppress his surprise at the quantity of out-of-the-way knowledge which I displayed. He pronounced upon me the severe sentence,—that dunce I was, and dunce was to remain—which, however, my excellent and learned friend lived to revoke over a bottle of Burgundy, at our literary club at Fortune's, of which he was a distinguished member.

Meanwhile, as if to eradicate my slightest tincture of Greek, I fell ill during the middle of Mr. Dalzell's second class, and migrated a second time to Kelso—where I again continued a long time reading what and how I pleased, and of course reading nothing but what afforded me immediate entertainment. The only thing which saved my mind from utter dissipation was that turn for historical pursuit, which never abandoned me even at the idlest period. I had forsworn the Latin classics for no reason I know of, unless because they were akin to the Greek, but the occasional perusal of Buchanan's History, that of Mathew Paris, and other monkish chronicles, kept up a kind of familiarity with the language even in its rudest state. But I forgot the very letters of the Greek alphabet; a loss never to be repaired, considering what that language is, and who they were who employed it in their compositions.

About this period, or soon afterwards, my father judged it proper I should study mathematics, a study upon which I entered with all the ardour of novelty. My tutor was an aged person, Dr. MacFait, who had in his time been distinguished as a teacher of this science. Age, however, and some domestic inconveniences, had diminished his pupils, and lessened his authority amongst the few who remained. I think that had I been more fortunately placed for instruction, or had I had the spur of emulation, I might have made some progress in this science, of which under the circumstances I have mentioned I only acquired a very superficial smattering.

In other studies I was rather more fortunate; I made some progress in Ethics under Professor John Bruce, and was selected as one of his students whose progress he approved, to read an essay before Principal Robertson. I was further instructed in Moral Philosophy at the class of Mr. Dugald Stewart, whose striking and impressive eloquence riveted the attention even of the most volatile student. To sum up my academical studies, I attended the class of History, then taught by the present Lord Woodhouselee, and, as far as I remember, no others, excepting those of the Civil and Municipal Law. So that if my learning be flimsy and inaccurate, the reader must have some compassion even for an idle workman, who had so narrow a foundation to build upon. If, however, it should ever fall to the lot of youth to peruse these pages—let such a reader remember that it is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth; that through every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and hampered by my own ignorance; and that I would at this moment give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if by doing so I could rest the remaining part upon a sound foundation of learning and science.

I imagine my father's reason for sending me to so few classes in the

College, was a desire that I should apply myself particularly to my legal studies. - He had not determined whether I should fill the situation of an Advocate or a Writer; but judiciously considering the technical knowledge of the latter to be useful at least, if not essential, to a barrister, he resolved I should serve the ordinary apprenticeship of five years to his own profession. I accordingly entered into indentures with my father about 1785—6, and entered upon the dry and barren wilderness of forms and conveyances.

I cannot reproach myself with being entirely an idle apprentice—far less, as the reader might reasonably have expected,

“A clerk foredoom’d my father’s soul to cross.”

The drudgery, indeed, of the office I disliked, and the confinement I altogether detested; but I loved my father, and I felt the rational pride and pleasure of rendering myself useful to him. I was ambitious also; and among my companions in labour the only way to gratify ambition was to labour hard and well. Other circumstances reconciled me in some measure to the confinement. The allowance for copy-money furnished a little fund for the *menus plaisirs* of the circulating library and the theatre; and this was no trifling incentive to labour. When actually at the oar, no man could pull it harder than I, and I remember writing upwards of 120 folio pages with no interval either for food or rest. Again, the hours of attendance on the office were lightened by the power of choosing my own books and reading them in my own way, which often consisted in beginning at the middle or the end of a volume. A deceased friend, who was a fellow-apprentice with me, used often to express his surprise that, after such a hop-step-and-jump perusal, I knew as much of the book as he had been able to acquire from reading it in the usual manner. My desk usually contained a store of most miscellaneous volumes, especially works of fiction of every kind, which were my supreme delight. I might except novels, unless those of the better and higher class, for though I read many of them, yet it was with more selection than might have been expected. The whole *Jemmy* and *Jenny Jessamy* tribe I abhorred, and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic I devoured without much discrimination, and I really believe I have read as much nonsense of this class as any man now living. Everything which touched on knight-errantry was particularly acceptable to me, and I soon attempted to imitate what I so greatly admired. My efforts, however, were in the manner of the tale-teller, not of the bard.

My greatest intimate, from the days of my schooldate, was Mr. John Irving, now a Writer to the Signet. We lived near each other, and by joint agreement were wont, each of us, to compose a romance for the other’s amusement. These legends, in which the martial and the miraculous always predominated, we rehearsed to each other during our walks, which were usually directed to the most solitary spots about Arthur’s Seat and Salisbury Crags. We naturally sought seclusion, for we were conscious no small degree of ridicule would have attended our

amusement, if the nature of it had become known. Whole holidays were spent in this singular pastime, which continued for two or three years, and had, I believe, no small effect in directing the turn of my imagination to the chivalrous and romantic in poetry and prose.

Meanwhile, the translations of Mr. Hoole having made me acquainted with Tasso and Ariosto, I learned from his notes on the latter, that the Italian language contained a fund of romantic lore. A part of my earnings was dedicated to an Italian class which I attended twice a week, and rapidly acquired some proficiency. I had previously renewed and extended my knowledge of the French language, from the same principle of romantic research. Tressan's romances, the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, and *Bibliothèque de Romans*, were already familiar to me, and I now acquired similar intimacy with the works of Dante, Boiardo, Pulci, and other eminent Italian authors. I fastened also, like a tiger, upon every collection of old songs or romances which chance threw in my way, or which my scrutiny was able to discover on the dusty shelves of John Sibbald's circulating library in the Parliament Square. This collection, now dismantled and dispersed, contained at that time many rare and curious works, seldom found in such a collection. Mr. Sibbald himself, a man of rough manners but of some taste and judgment, cultivated music and poetry, and in his shop I had a distant view of some literary characters, besides the privilege of ransacking the stores of old French and Italian books, which were in little demand among the bulk of his subscribers. Here I saw the unfortunate Andrew Macdonald, author of *Vimonda*; and here, too, I saw at a distance, the boast of Scotland, Robert Burns. Of the latter I shall presently have occasion to speak more fully.

I am inadvertently led to confound dates while I talk of this remote period, for, as I have no notes, it is impossible for me to remember with accuracy the progress of studies, if they deserve the name, so irregular and miscellaneous. But about the second year of my apprenticeship, my health, which, from rapid growth and other causes, had been hitherto rather uncertain and delicate, was affected by the breaking of a blood-vessel. The regimen I had to undergo on this occasion was far from agreeable. It was spring, and the weather raw and cold, yet I was confined to bed with a single blanket, and bled and blistered till I scarcely had a pulse left. I had all the appetite of a growing boy, but was prohibited any sustenance beyond what was absolutely necessary for the support of nature, and that in vegetables alone. Above all, with a considerable disposition to talk, I was not permitted to open my lips without one or two old ladies who watched my couch being ready at once to souse upon me, "imposing silence with a stilly sound." My only refuge was reading and playing at chess. To the romances and poetry, which I chiefly delighted in, I had always added the study of history, especially as connected with military events. I was encouraged in this latter study by a tolerable acquaintance with geography, and by the opportunities I had enjoyed while with Mr. MacFait to learn the meaning of the more ordinary terms of fortification. While, therefore, I lay in this dreary and silent solitude, I fell upon the resource of illustrating the battles I read of by the childish expedient of arranging

shells, and seeds, and pebbles, so as to represent encountering armies. Diminutive cross-bows were contrived to mimic artillery, and with the assistance of a friendly carpenter, I contrived to model a fortress, which, like that of Uncle Toby, represented whatever place happened to be uppermost in my imagination. I fought my way thus through Vertot's *Knights of Malta*—a book which, as it hovered between history and romance, was exceedingly dear to me; and Orme's interesting and beautiful *History of Indostan*, whose copious plans, aided by the clear and luminous explanations of the author, rendered my imitative amusement peculiarly easy. Other moments of these weary weeks were spent in looking at the Meadow Walks, by assistance of a combination of mirrors so arranged that, while lying in bed, I could see the troops march out to exercise, or any other incident which occurred on that promenade.

After one or two relapses, my constitution recovered the injury it had sustained, though for several months afterwards I was restricted to a severe vegetable diet. And I must say, in passing, that though I gained health under this necessary restriction, yet it was far from being agreeable to me, and I was affected whilst under its influence with a nervousness which I never felt before or since. A disposition to start upon slight alarms—a want of decision in feeling and acting, which has not usually been my failing—an acute sensibility to trifling inconveniences—and an unnecessary apprehension of contingent misfortunes, rise to my memory as connected with my vegetable diet, although they may very possibly have been entirely the result of the disorder and not of the cure. Be this as it may, with this illness I bade farewell both to disease and medicine, for since that time, till the hour I am now writing, I have enjoyed a state of the most robust health, having only had to complain of occasional headaches or stomachic affections, when I have been long without taking exercise or have lived too convivially—the latter having been occasionally, though not habitually, the error of my youth, as the former has been of my advanced life.

My frame gradually became hardened with my constitution, and being both tall and muscular, I was rather disfigured than disabled by my lameness. This personal disadvantage did not prevent me from taking much exercise on horseback, and making long journeys on foot, in the course of which I often walked from twenty to thirty miles a day. A distinct instance occurs to me. I remember walking with poor James Ramsay, my fellow-apprentice, now no more, and two other friends to breakfast at Prestonpans. We spent the forenoon in visiting the ruins at Seton, and the field of battle at Preston—dined at Prestonpans on *tiled haddocks* very sumptuously—drank half a bottle of port each, and returned in the evening. This could not be less than thirty miles, nor do I remember being at all fatigued upon the occasion.

These excursions on foot or horseback formed by far my most favourite amusement. I have all my life delighted in travelling, though I have never enjoyed that pleasure upon a large scale. It was a propensity which I sometimes indulged so unduly as to alarm and vex my parents. Wood, water, wilderness itself had an inexpressible charm for me, and I had a dreamy way of going much farther than I intended, so that unconsciously my return was protracted, and my parents had sometimes

serious cause of unensiness. For example, I once set out with Mr. George Abercromby \* (the son of the immortal General), Mr. William Clerk, and some others, to fish in the lake above Howgate, and the stream which descends from it into the Esk. We breakfasted at Howgate, and fished the whole day; and while we were on our return next morning I was easily seduced by William Clerk, then a great intimate, to visit Penny-cuik House, the seat of his family. Here he and John Irving, and I for their sake, were overwhelmed with kindness by the late Sir John Clerk and his lady, the present Dowager Lady Clerk. The pleasure of looking at fine pictures, the beauty of the place, and the flattering hospitality of the owners, drowned all recollection of home for a day or two. Meanwhile our companions, who had walked on without being aware of our digression, returned to Edinburgh without us, and excited no small alarm in my father's household. At length, however, they became accustomed to my escapades. My father used to protest to me on such occasions that he thought I was born to be a strolling pedlar, and though the prediction was intended to mortify my conceit, I am not sure that I altogether disliked it. I was now familiar with Shakspeare, and thought of Autolycus's song—

"Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,  
And merrily hent the stile-a:  
A merry heart goes all the day,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a."

My principal object in these excursions was the pleasure of seeing romantic scenery, or what afforded me at least equal pleasure, the places which had been distinguished by remarkable historical events. The delight with which I regarded the former of course had general approbation, but I often found it difficult to procure sympathy with the interest I felt in the latter. Yet to me the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery; on the contrary, few delighted more in its general effect. But I was unable with the eye of a painter to dissect the various parts of the scene to comprehend how one bore upon the other, to estimate the effect which various features of the view had in producing its leading and general effect. I have never, indeed, been capable of doing this with precision or nicety, though my latter studies have led me to amend and arrange my original ideas upon the subject. Even the humble ambition, which I long cherished, of making sketches of those places which interested me, from a defect of eye or of hand was totally ineffectual. After long study and many efforts, I was unable to apply the elements of perspective or of shade to the scene before me, and was obliged to relinquish in despair an art which I was most anxious to practise. But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrew's, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St.

\* Now Lord Abercromby.—[1826.]

Andrew's to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep. I mention this to show the distinction between a sense of the picturesque in action and in scenery. If I have since been able in poetry to trace with some success the principles of the latter, it has always been with reference to its general and leading features, or under some alliance with moral feeling; and even this proficiency has cost me study. Meanwhile, I endeavoured to make amends for my ignorance of drawing by adopting a sort of technical memory respecting the scenes I visited. Wherever I went, I cut a piece of a branch from a tree: these constituted what I called my log-book; and I intended to have a set of chess-men out of them, each having reference to the place where it was cut,—as the kings from Falkland and Holyrood; the queens from Queen Mary's yew-tree at Crookston; the bishops from abbeys or episcopal palaces; the knights from baronial residences; the rooks from royal fortresses; and the pawns generally from places worthy of historical note. But this whimsical design I never carried into execution.

With music it was even worse than with painting. My mother was anxious we should at least learn Psalmody; but the incurable defects of my voice and ear soon drove my teacher to despair.\* It is only by long practice that I have acquired the power of selecting or distinguishing melodies; and although now few things delight or affect me more than a simple tune sung with feeling, yet I am sensible that even this pitch of musical taste has only been gained by attention and habit, and, as it were, by my feeling of the words being associated with the tune. I have, therefore, been usually unsuccessful in composing words to a tune, although my friend, Dr. Clarke, and other musical composers, have sometimes been able to make a happy union between their music and my poetry.

In other points, however, I began to make some amends for the irregularity of my education. It is well known that in Edinburgh one great spur to emulation among youthful students is in those associations called *literary societies*, formed not only for the purpose of debate, but of composition. These undoubtedly have some disadvantages, where a bold, petulant, and disputatious temper happens to be combined with considerable information and talent. Still, however, in order to such a person

\* The late Alexander Campbell, a warm-hearted man, and an enthusiast in Scottish music, which he sang most beautifully, had this ungrateful task imposed on him. He was a man of many accomplishments, but dashed with a *bizarrie* of temper which made them useless to their proprietor. He wrote several books—as a *Tour in Scotland*, &c.—and he made an advantageous marriage, but fell nevertheless into distressed circumstances, which I had the pleasure of relieving, if I could not remove. His sense of gratitude was very strong, and showed itself oddly in one respect. He would never allow that I had a bad ear; but contended that if I did not understand music, it was because I did not choose to learn it. But when he attended us in George's Square, our neighbour, Lady Cumming, sent to beg the boys might not all be flogged precisely at the same hour, as, though she had no doubt the punishment was deserved, the noise of the concord was really dreadful. Robert was the only one of our family who could sing, though my father was musical and a performer on the violoncello at the *gentlemen's concerts*.—[1826.]

being actually spoiled by his mixing in such debates, his talents must be of a very rare nature, or his effrontery must be proof to every species of assault ; for there is generally, in a well-selected society of this nature, talent sufficient to meet the forwardest, and satire enough to penetrate the most undaunted. I am particularly obliged to this sort of club for introducing me about my seventeenth year into the society which at one time I had entirely dropped ; for from the time of my illness at College I had had little or no intercourse with any of my class companions, one or two only excepted. Now, however, about 1788, I began to feel and take my ground in society. A ready wit, a good deal of enthusiasm, and a perception that soon ripened into tact and observation of character, rendered me an acceptable companion to many young men whose acquisitions in philosophy and science were infinitely superior to anything I could boast.

In the business of these societies—for I was a member of more than one successively—I cannot boast of having made any great figure. I never was a good speaker unless upon some subject which strongly animated my feelings ; and, as I was totally unaccustomed to composition, as well as to the art of generalizing my ideas upon any subject, my literary essays were but very poor work. I never attempted them unless when compelled to do so by the regulations of the society, and then I was like the Lord of Castle Rackrent, who was obliged to cut down a tree to get a few faggots to boil the kettle ; for the quantity of ponderous and miscellaneous knowledge, which I really possessed on many subjects, was not easily condensed, or brought to bear upon the object I wished particularly to become master of. Yet there occurred opportunities when this odd lumber of my brain, especially that which was connected with the recondite parts of history, did me, as Hamlet says, “yeoman’s service.” My memory of events was like one of the large, old-fashioned stone-cannons of the Turks—very difficult to load well and discharge, but making a powerful effect when by good chance any object did come within range of its shot. Such fortunate opportunities of exploding with effect maintained my literary character among my companions, with whom I soon met with great indulgence and regard. The persons with whom I chiefly lived at this period of my youth were William Clerk, already mentioned ; James Edmonstoun of Newton ; George Abercromby ; Adam Ferguson, son of the celebrated Professor Ferguson, and who combined the lightest and most airy temper with the best and kindest disposition ; John Irving, already mentioned ; the Honourable Thomas Douglas, now Earl of Selkirk ; David Boyle,\*—and two or three others, who sometimes plunged deeply into politics and metaphysics, and not unfrequently “doffed the world aside, and bid it pass.”

Looking back on these times, I cannot applaud in all respects the way in which our days were spent. There was too much idleness, and sometimes too much conviviality ; but our hearts were warm, our minds honourably bent on knowledge and literary distinction ; and if I, certainly the least informed of the party, may be permitted to bear witness, we were not without the fair and creditable means of attaining the dis-

tion to which we aspired. In this society I was naturally led to correct my former useless course of reading; for—feeling myself greatly inferior to my companions in metaphysical philosophy and other branches of regular study—I laboured, not without some success, to acquire at least such a portion of knowledge as might enable me to maintain my rank in conversation. In this I succeeded pretty well; but unfortunately then, as often since through my life, I incurred the deserved ridicule of my friends from the superficial nature of my acquisitions, which being, in the mercantile phrase, *got up* for society, very often proved flimsy in the texture; and thus the gifts of an uncommonly retentive memory and acute powers of perception were sometimes detrimental to their possessor, by encouraging him to a presumptuous reliance upon them.

Amidst these studies, and in this society, the time of my apprenticeship elapsed; and in 1790, or thereabouts, it became necessary that I should seriously consider to which department of the law I was to attach myself. My father behaved with the most parental kindness. He offered, if I preferred his own profession, immediately to take me into partnership with him, which, though his business was much diminished, still afforded me an immediate prospect of a handsome independence. But he did not disguise his wish that I should relinquish this situation to my younger brother, and embrace the more ambitious profession of the bar. I had little hesitation in making my choice, for I was never very fond of money; and in no other particular do the professions admit of a comparison. Besides, I knew and felt the inconveniences attached to that of a Writer; and I thought (like a young man) many of them were *ingenio haud subeunda meo*. The appearance of personal dependence which that profession requires was disagreeable to me; the sort of connection between the client and the attorney seemed to render the latter more subservient than was quite agreeable to my nature; and, besides, I had seen many sad examples while overlooking my father's business, that the utmost exertions, and the best meant services, do not secure the *man of business*, as he is called, from great loss, and most ungracious treatment on the part of his employers. The bar, though I was conscious of my deficiencies as a public speaker, was the line of ambition and liberty; it was that also for which most of my contemporary friends were destined. And, lastly, although I would willingly have relieved my father of the labours of his business, yet I saw plainly we could not have agreed on some particulars if we had attempted to conduct it together, and that I should disappoint his expectations if I did not turn to the bar. So to that object my studies were directed with great ardour and perseverance during the years 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792.

In the usual course of study, the Roman or Civil Law was the first object of my attention—the second, the Municipal Law of Scotland. In the course of reading on both subjects, I had the advantage of studying in conjunction with my friend William Clerk, a man of the most acute intellects and powerful apprehension, and who, should he ever shake loose the fetters of indolence by which he has been hitherto trammelled, cannot fail to be distinguished in the highest degree. We attended the regular classes of both laws in the University of Edinburgh. The Civil

Law chair, now worthily filled by Mr. Alexander Irving, might at that time be considered as in *abeyance*, since the person by whom it was occupied had never been fit for the situation, and was then almost in a state of dotage. But the Scotch Law lectures were those of Mr. David Hume, who still continues to occupy that situation with as much honour to himself as advantage to his country. I copied over his lectures twice with my own hand, from notes taken in the class, and when I have had occasion to consult them, I can never sufficiently admire the penetration and clearness of conception which were necessary to the arrangement of the fabric of law, formed originally under the strictest influence of feudal principles, and innovated, altered, and broken in upon by the change of times, of habits, and of manners, until it resembles some ancient castle, partly entire, partly ruinous, partly dilapidated, patched and altered during the succession of ages by a thousand additions and combinations, yet still exhibiting, with the marks of its antiquity, symptoms of the skill and wisdom of its founders, and capable of being analysed and made the subject of a methodical plan by an architect who can understand the various styles of the different ages in which it was subjected to alteration. Such an architect has Mr. Hume been to the law of Scotland, neither wandering into fanciful and abstruse disquisitions, which are the more proper subject of the antiquary, nor satisfied with presenting to his pupils a dry and undigested detail of the laws in their present state, but combining the past state of our legal enactments with the present, and tracing clearly and judiciously the changes which took place, and the causes which led to them.

Under these auspices I commenced my legal studies. A little parlour was assigned me in my father's house, which was spacious and convenient, and I took the exclusive possession of my new realms with all the feelings of novelty and liberty. Let me do justice to the only years of my life in which I applied to learning with stern, steady, and undeviating industry. The rule of my friend Clerk and myself was, that we should mutually qualify ourselves for undergoing an examination upon certain points of law every morning in the week, Sundays excepted. This was at first to have taken place alternately at each other's houses, but we soon discovered that my friend's resolution was inadequate to severing him from his couch at the early hour fixed for this exercitation. Accordingly I agreed to go every morning to his house, which, being at the extremity of Prince's Street, New Town, was a walk of two miles. With great punctuality, however, I beat him up to his task every morning before seven o'clock, and in the course of two summers, we went, by way of question and answer, through the whole of Heineccius's Analysis of the Institutes and Pandects, as well as through the smaller copy of Erskine's Institutes of the Law of Scotland. This course of study enabled us to pass with credit the usual trials, which, by the regulations of the Faculty of Advocates, must be undergone by every candidate for admission into their body. My friend William Clerk and I passed these ordeals on the same days—namely, the Civil Law trial on the [30th June, 1791], and the Scots Law trial on the [6th July, 1792]. On the [11th July, 1792] we both assumed the gown with all its duties and honours.

My progress in life during these two or three years had been gradually

enlarging my acquaintance, and facilitating my entrance into good company. My father and mother, already advanced in life, saw little society at home, excepting that of near relations, or upon particular occasions, so that I was left to form connexions in a great measure for myself. It is not difficult for a youth with a real desire to please and be pleased, to make his way into good society in Edinburgh—or indeed anywhere—and my family connexions, if they did not greatly further, had nothing to embarrass my progress. I was a gentleman, and so welcome anywhere, if so be I could behave myself, as Tony Lumpkin says, “in a concatenation accordingly.”

## CHAPTER 11.

### ANECDOTES OF SCOTT'S CHILDHOOD.

WALTER SCOTT, the eldest son of Robert of Sandy-Knowe, appears to have been the first of the family that ever adopted a town life, or anything claiming to be classed among the learned professions. His branch of the law, however, could not in those days be advantageously prosecuted without extensive connexions in the country; his own were too respectable not to be of much service to him in his calling, and they were cultivated accordingly. His professional visits to Roxburghshire and Ettrick Forest were, in his vigorous life, very frequent; and though he was never supposed to have any tincture either of romance or poetry in his composition, he retained to the last a warm affection for his native district, with a certain reluctant flavour of the old feelings and prejudices of the Borderer. I have little to add to Sir Walter's short and respectful notice of his father, except that I have heard it confirmed by the testimony of many less partial observers. According to every account, he was a most just, honourable, conscientious man; only too high of spirit for some parts of his business. "He passed from the cradle to the grave," says a surviving relation, "without making an enemy or losing a friend. He was a most affectionate parent, and if he discouraged, rather than otherwise, his son's early devotion to the pursuits which led him to the height of literary eminence, it was only because he did not understand what such things meant, and considered it his duty to keep his young man to that path in which good sense and industry might, humanly speaking, be thought sure of success."

Sir Walter's mother was short of stature, and by no means comely, at least after the days of her early youth. She had received, as became the daughter of an eminently learned physician, the best sort of education then bestowed on young gentlewomen in Scotland. The poet, speaking of Mrs. Euphemia Sinclair, the mistress of the school at which his mother was reared, to the ingenious local antiquary, Mr. Robert Chambers, said that "she must have been possessed of uncommon talents for education, as all her young ladies were, in after life, fond of reading, wrote and spelled admirably, were well acquainted with history and the *belles lettres*, without neglecting the more homely duties of the needle and account-book; and perfectly well bred in society." Mr. Chambers adds, "Sir W. further communicated that his mother, and many others of Mrs. Sinclair's pupils, were sent afterwards to be finished off by the Honourable Mrs. Ogilvie, a lady who trained her young friends to a style of manners which would now be considered intolerably stiff. Such was the effect

of this early training upon the mind of Mrs. Scott, that even when she approached her eightieth year, she took as much care to avoid touching her chair with her back, as if she had still been under the stern eye of Mrs. Ogilvie.\* The physiognomy of the poet bore, if their portraits may be trusted, no resemblance to either of his parents.

Mr. Scott was nearly thirty years of age when he married, and six children, born to him between 1759 and 1766, all perished in infancy. A suspicion that the close situation of the College Wynd had been unfavourable to the health of his family, was the motive that induced him to remove to the house which he ever afterwards occupied in George's Square. This removal took place shortly after the poet's birth; and the children born subsequently were in general healthy. Of a family of twelve, of whom six lived to maturity, not one now survives; nor have any of them left descendants, except Sir Walter himself, and his next and dearest brother, Thomas Scott.

He says that his consciousness of existence dated from Sandy-Knowe; and how deep and indelible was the impression which its romantic localities had left on his imagination, I need not remind the readers of *Marmion* and the *Eve of St. John*.

There are still living in that neighbourhood two old women, who were in the domestic service of Sandy-Knowe, when the lame child was brought thither in the third year of his age. One of them, Tibby Hunter, remembers his coming well; and that "he was a sweet-tempered bairn, a darling with all about the house. The young ewemilkers delighted," she says, "to carry him about on their backs among the crags; and he was very gleg (quick) at the uptake, and soon kenned every sheep and lamb by headmark as well as any of them." His great pleasure, however, was in the society of the "aged hind," recorded in the epistle to Erskine. "Auld Sandy Ormistoun," called, from the most dignified part of his function, "the Cow-bailie," had the chief superintendence of the flocks that browsed upon "the velvet tufts of loveliest green." If the child saw him in the morning, he could not be satisfied unless the old man would set him astride on his shoulder, and take him to keep him company as he lay watching his charge.

"Here was poetic impulse given  
By the green hill and clear blue heaven."

The Cow-bailie blew a particular note on his whistle, which signified to the maid-servants in the house below when the little boy wished to be carried home again. He told his friend, Mr. Skene of Rubislaw, when spending a summer day in his old age among these well-remembered crags, that he delighted to roll about on the grass all day long in the midst of the flock, and that "the sort of fellowship he thus formed with the sheep and lambs had impressed his mind with a degree of affectionate feeling towards them which had lasted throughout life." There is a story of his

\* See Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh*, vol. ii., pp. 127-131. The functions here ascribed to Mrs. Ogilvie may appear to modern readers little consistent with her rank. Such things, however, were not uncommon in those days in poor old Scotland. Ladies with whom I have conversed in my youth well remembered an *Honourable Mrs. Maitland* who practised the obstetric art in the Cowgate.

having been forgotten one day among the knolls when a thunder-storm came on ; and his aunt, suddenly recollecting his situation, and running out to bring him home, is said to have found him lying on his back, clapping his hands at the lightning, and crying out "Bonny, bonny !" at every flash.

I find the following marginal note on his copy of Allan Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany (edition 1724) :—"This book belonged to my grandfather, Robert Scott, and out of it I was taught Hardiknute by heart before I could read the ballad myself. It was the first poem I ever learnt—the last I shall ever forget." According to Tibby Hunter, he was not particularly fond of his book, embracing every pretext for joining his friend the Cow-bailie out of doors ; but "Miss Jenny was a grand hand at keeping him to the bit, and by degrees he came to read brawly."\* An early acquaintance of a higher class, Mrs. Duncan, the wife of the present excellent minister of Mertoun, informs me that, though she was younger than Sir Walter, she has a dim remembrance of the interior of Sandy-Knowe :—"Old Mrs. Scott, sitting with her spinning-wheel, at one side of the fire, in a *clean clean* parlour ; the grandfather, a good deal failed, in his elbow-chair opposite ; and the little boy lying on the carpet, at the old man's feet, listening to the Bible, or whatever good book Miss Jenny was reading to the ."<sup>†</sup> Robert Scott died before his grandson was four years of age.

Miss Jenny Scott must have been a woman of taste and acquirements very far above what could have been often found among Scotch ladies, of any but the highest class at least, in that day. In the winter of 1777, she and her charge spent some few weeks—not happy weeks, the "Memoir" hints them to have been—in George's Square, Edinburgh ; and it so happened, that during this little interval, Mr. and Mrs. Scott received in their domestic circle a guest capable of appreciating, and, fortunately for us, of recording in a very striking manner the remarkable development of young Walter's faculties. Mrs. Cockburn, mentioned by him in his Memoir as the authoress of the modern Flowers of the Forest, born a Rutherford, of Fairnalie, in Selkirkshire, was distantly related to the poet's mother, with whom she had through life been in habits of intimate friendship. This accomplished woman was staying at Ravelstone, in the vicinity of Edinburgh, a seat of the Keiths of Dunnotar, nearly related to Mrs. Scott and to herself. With some of that family she spent an evening in George's Square. She chanced to be writing next day to Dr. Douglas, the well-known and much respected minister of her native parish, Galashiels ; and her letter, of which the doctor's son has kindly given me a copy, contains the following passage :—

"Edinburgh, Saturday night, 15th of the gloomy month when the people of England hang and drown themselves.

\* \* \* \* "I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was

\* This old woman still possesses "the *banes*" (bones)—that is to say, the boards—of a Psalm-book, which Master Walter gave her at Sandy-Knowe. "He chose it," she says, "of a very large print, that I might be able to read it when I was *very auld*—*forty year auld* ; but the bairns pulled the leaves out langsyne."

reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on ; it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. He lifted his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he ; 'crash it goes !—they will all perish !' After his agitation, he turns to me. 'That is too melancholy,' says he ; 'I had better read you something more amusing.' I preferred a little chat, and asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, which he gave me wonderfully. One of his observations was, 'How strange it is that Adam, just new come into the world, should know everything—that must be the poet's fancy,' says he. But when he was told he was created perfect by God, he instantly yielded. When taken to bed last night, he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady ?' says she. 'Why, Mrs. Cockburn ; for I think she is a virtuoso, like myself.' 'Dear Walter,' says aunt Jenny, 'what is a virtuoso ?' 'Don't ye know ? Why, it's one who wishes and will know everything.'

"Now, sir, you will think this a very silly story. Pray, what age do you suppose this boy to be ? Name it now, before I tell you. Why, twelve or fourteen. No such thing ; he is not quite six years old.\* He has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick. You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

Some particulars in Mrs. Cockburn's account appear considerably at variance with what Sir Walter has told us respecting his own boyish proficiency—especially in the article of pronunciation. On that last head, however, Mrs. Cockburn was not, probably, a very accurate judge ; all that can be said is, that if at this early period he had acquired anything which could be justly described as an English accent, he soon lost, and never again recovered, what he had thus gained from his short residence at Bath. In after life his pronunciation of words, considered separately, was seldom much different from that of a well-educated Englishman of his time ; but he used many words in a sense which belonged to Scotland, not to England, and the tone and accent remained broadly Scotch, though, unless in the *burr*, which no doubt, smacked of the country bordering on Northumberland, there was no provincial peculiarity about his utterance. He had strong powers of mimicry—could talk with a peasant quite in his own style, and frequently in general society introduced rustic *patois*, northern, southern, or midland, with great truth and effect ; but these things were inlaid dramatically, or playfully, upon his narrative. His exquisite taste in this matter was not less remarkable in his conversation than in the prose of his Scotch novels.

Another lady, nearly connected with the Keiths of Ravelstone, has a lively recollection of young Walter, when paying a visit much about the same period to his kind relation,† the mistress of that picturesque old mansion, which furnished him in after days with many of the features of his Tully-Weolan, and whose venerable gardens, with their massive hedges of yew and holly, he always considered as the ideal of the art.

\* He was, in fact, six years and three months old before this letter was written.

† Mrs. Keith of Ravelstone was born a Swinton of Swinton, and sister to Sir Walter's maternal grandmother.

The lady, whose letter I have now before me, says she distinctly remembers the sickly boy sitting at the gate of the house with his attendant, when a poor mendicant approached, old and woebegone, to claim the charity which none asked for in vain at Ravelstone. When the man was retiring, the servant remarked to Walter that he ought to be thankful to Providence for having placed him above the want and misery he had been contemplating. "The child looked up with a half wistful, half incredulous expression,—and said *Homer was a beggar!* 'How do you know that?' said the other. 'Why, don't you remember,' answered the little virtuoso, 'that

"Seven *Roman* cities strove for Homer dead,  
Through which the living Homer begged his bread"

The lady smiled at the "*Roman* cities," but already—

"Each blank in faithless memory void  
The poet's glowing thought supplied."

It was in this same year, 1777, that he spent some time at Prestonpans; made his first acquaintance with George Constable, the original of his *Monkbarns*; explored the field where Colonel Gardiner received his death-wound, under the learned guidance of Dalgetty; and marked the spot "where the grass grew long and green, distinguishing it from the rest of the field,"\* above the grave of poor Balmawhapple.

His uncle Thomas had the management of the farm affairs at Sandy-Knowe, when Walter returned thither from Prestonpans; he was a kindhearted man, and very fond of the child. Appearing on his return somewhat strengthened, his uncle promoted him from the Cow-bailie's shoulder to a dwarf of the Shetland race, not so large as many a Newfoundland dog. This creature walked freely into the house, and was regularly fed from the boy's hand. He soon learned to sit her well, and often alarmed aunt Jenny by cantering over the rough places about the tower. In the evening of his life, when he had a grandchild afflicted with an infirmity akin to his own, he provided him with a little mare of the same breed, and gave her the name of *Marion*, in memory of this early favourite.

The report of Walter's progress in horsemanship probably reminded his father that it was time he should be learning other things beyond the department either of aunt Jenny or uncle Thomas, and after a few months he was recalled to Edinburgh. But extraordinary as was the progress he had by this time made in that self-education which alone is of primary consequence to spirit:—of his order, he was found too deficient in lesser matters to be at once entered in the High School. Probably his mother dreaded, and deferred as long as she could, the day when he should be exposed to the rude collision of a crowd of boys. At all events, he was placed first in a little private school kept by one Leechman in Bristo-port; and then, that experiment not answering expectation, under the domestic tutorage of Mr. James French, afterwards minister of East Kilbride in Lanarkshire. This respectable man grounded him in the

\* Waverley, vol. ii. p. 175.

Latin grammar, and considered him fit to join Luke Fraser's second class in October, 1779.

His own account of his progress at this excellent seminary is, on the whole, very similar to what I have received from some of his surviving schoolfellows. His quick apprehension and powerful memory enabled him, at little cost of labour, to perform the usual routine of tasks, in such a manner as to keep him generally "in a decent place" (so he once expressed it to Mr. Skene), "about the middle of the class ; with which," he continued, "I was the better contented, that it chanced to be near the fire."\* Mr. Fraser was, I believe, more zealous in enforcing attention to the technicalities of grammar, than to excite curiosity about historical facts, or imagination to strain after the flights of a poet. There is no evidence that Scott, though he speaks of him as his "kind master," in remembrance probably of sympathy for his physical infirmities, ever attracted his special notice with reference to scholarship ; but Adam, the rector, into whose class he passed in October, 1782, was, as his situation demanded, a teacher of a more liberal caste, and though never, even under his guidance, did Walter fix and concentrate his ambition so as to maintain an eminent place, still the vivacity of his talents was observed, and the readiness of his memory in particular was so often displayed, that (as Mr. Irving, his chosen friend of that day, informs me), the doctor "would constantly refer to him for dates, the particulars of battles, and other remarkable events alluded to in Horace, or whatever author the boys were reading, and used to call him the historian of the class." No one who has read, as few have not, Dr. Adam's interesting work on Roman Antiquities, will doubt the author's capacity for stimulating such a mind as young Scott's.

He speaks of himself as occasionally "glancing like a meteor from the bottom to the top of the form." His schoolfellow, Mr. Claud Russell, remembers that he once made a great leap in consequence of the stupidity of some laggard on what is called the *dull's* (dolt's) bench, who being asked, on boggling at *cum*, "what part of speech is *with*?" answered, "*a substantive*." The rector, after a moment's pause, thought it worth while to ask his *dux*—"Is *with* ever a substantive?" but all were silent until the query reached Scott, then near the bottom of the class, who instantly responded by quoting a verse of the book of Judges :—"And Samson said unto Delilah, If they bind me with seven green *withs* that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and as another man." Another upward movement, accomplished in a less laudable manner, but still one strikingly illustrative of his ingenious resources, I am enabled to preserve through the kindness of a brother poet and esteemed friend, to whom Sir Walter himself communicated it in the melancholy twilight of his bright day.

Mr. Rogers says : "Sitting one day alone with him in your house, in the Regent's Park—it was the day but one before he left it to embark at Portsmouth for Malta)—I led him, among other things, to tell me once again a story of himself, which he had formerly told me, and which

\* According to Mr. Irving's recollection, Scott's place, after the first winter, was usually between the 7th and the 15th from the top of the class. He adds "Dr. James Buchan was always the *dux* ; David Douglas (Lord Reston) *second* ; and Lord Melville *third*."

I had often wished to recover. When I returned home, I wrote it down as nearly as I could, in his own words ; and here they are. The subject is an achievement worthy of Ulysses himself, and such as many of his schoolfellows could, no doubt, have related of him ; but I fear I have done it no justice, though the story is so very characteristic that it should not be lost. The inimitable manner in which he told it, the glance of the eye, the turn of the head, and the light that played over his faded features, as, one by one, the circumstances came back to him, accompanied by a thousand boyish feelings, that had slept perhaps for years, there is no language, not even his own, could convey to you ; but you can supply them. Would that others could do so, who had not the good fortune to know him !—The memorandum (Friday, October 21, 1831) is as follows :—

“There was a boy in my class at school, who stood always at the top,\* nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day came after day, and still he kept his place, do what I would ; till at length I observed that when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure ; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it ; it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place ; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him ; and often have I resolved to make him some reparation ; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow ! I believe he is dead ; he took early to drinking.”

The Autobiography tells us that his translations in verse from Horace and Virgil were often approved by Dr. Adam. One of these little pieces, written in a weak, boyish scrawl, within pencilled marks still visible, had been carefully preserved by his mother ; it was found folded up in a cover inscribed by the old lady—“*My Walter's first lines, 1782.*†

In the interval before Scott's entrance at College, he spent some time with his aunt, who now inhabited a cottage at Kelso ; but the Memoir, I suspect, gives too much extension to that residence—which may be accounted for by his blending with it a similar visit which he paid to the same place during his College vacation of the next year.

Some of the features of Miss Jenny's abode at Kelso are alluded to in the Memoir, but the fullest description of it occurs in his “*Essay on Landscape Gardening*” (1828), where he says :—“A small cottage, adjacent to a beautiful village, the habitation of an ancient maiden lady, was

\* Mr. Irving inclines to think that this incident must have occurred during Scott's attendance on Luke Fraser, not after he went to Dr. Adam ; and he also suspects that the boy referred to sat at the top not of the class, but of Scott's own bench or division of the class.

† See Poems.

for some time my abode. It was situated in a garden of seven or eight acres, planted about the beginning of the eighteenth century, by one of the Millars related to the author of the *Gardeners' Dictionary*, or, for aught I know, by himself. It was full of long straight walks, between hedges of yew and hornbeam, which rose tall and close on every side. There were thickets of flowery shrubs, a bower, and an arbour, to which access was obtained through a little maze of contorted walks calling itself a labyrinth. In the centre of the bower was a splendid platanus, or Oriental plane—a huge hill of leaves—one of the noblest specimens of that regularly beautiful tree which I remember to have seen. In different parts of the garden were fine ornamental trees, which had attained great size, and the orchard was filled with fruit-trees of the best description. There were seats and hilly walks, and a banquetting-house. I visited this scene lately, after an absence of many years. Its air of retreat, the seclusion which its alleys afforded, was entirely gone; the huge platanus had died, like most of its kind, in the beginning of this century; the hedges were cut down, the trees stubbed up, and the whole character of the place so destroyed, that I was glad when I could leave it." It was under this *Platanus* that Scott first devoured Percy's *Reliques*. I remember well being with him, in 1820 or 1821, when he revisited the favourite scene, and the sadness of his looks when he discovered that "huge hill of leaves" was no more.

To keep up his scholarship while staying at *the garden*, he attended daily, as he informs us, the public school at Kelso, and here he made his first acquaintance with a family, two members of which were intimately connected with the most important literary transactions of his after life—James Ballantyne, the printer of almost all his works, and his brother John, who had a share in the publication of many of them. Their father was a respectable tradesman in this pretty town. The elder of the brothers, who did not long survive his illustrious friend, was kind enough to make an exertion on behalf of this work, while stretched on the bed from which he never rose, and dictated a valuable paper of *memoranda*, from which I shall here introduce my first extract:—

"I think" (says James Ballantyne) "it was in the year 1783, that I first became acquainted with Sir Walter Scott, then a boy about my own age, at the grammar school of Kelso, of which Mr. Lancelot Whale was the rector. The impression left by his manners was, even at that early period, calculated to be deep, and I cannot recall any other instance in which the man and the boy continued to resemble each other so much and so long. Walter Scott was not a constant schoolfellow at this seminary; he only attended it for a few weeks during the vacation of the Edinburgh High School. He was then, as he continued during all his after life to be, devoted to antiquarian lore, and was certainly the best story-teller I had ever heard, either then or since. He soon discovered that I was as fond of listening as he himself was of relating; and I remember it was a thing of daily occurrence, that after he had made himself master of his own lesson—I, alas! being still sadly to seek in mine—he used to whisper to me, 'Come, slink over beside me, Jamie, and I'll tell you a story.' I well recollect that he had a form or seat appropriated to himself, the particular reason of which I cannot tell, but

he was always treated with a peculiar degree of respect, not by the boys of the different classes merely, but by the venerable Master Lancelot himself, who, an absent, grotesque being, betwixt six and seven feet high, was nevertheless an admirable scholar, and sure to be delighted to find any one so well qualified to sympathize with him as young Walter Scott; and the affectionate gratitude of the young pupil was never intermitted, so long as his venerable master continued to live. I may mention, in passing, that old Whale bore, in many particulars, a strong resemblance to Dominie Sampson, though, it must be admitted, combining more gentlemanly manners with equal classical lore, and, on the whole, being a much superior sort of person. In the intervals of school hours, it was our constant practice to walk together by the banks of the Tweed, our employment continuing exactly the same, for his stories seemed to be quite inexhaustible. This intercourse continued during the summers of the years 1783-4, but was broken off in 1785-6, when I went into Edinburgh to College."

### CHAPTER III.

#### ANECDOTES OF SCOTT'S YOUTH.

IN the Minute-books of the Society of Writers to the Signet appears the following entry :—"Edinburgh, 15th May, 1786, Compeared Walter Scott, and presented an indenture, dated 31st March last, entered into between him and Walter Scott, his son, for five years from the date thereof, under a mutual penalty of £40 sterling."

An inauspicious step this might at first sight appear in the early history of one so strongly predisposed for pursuits wide as the antipodes asunder from the dry technicalities of conveyancing ; but he himself, I believe, was never heard, in his mature age, to express any regret that it should have been taken ; and I am convinced, for my part, that it was a fortunate one. It prevented him, indeed, from passing with the usual regularity through a long course of Scotch metaphysics ; but I extremely doubt whether any discipline could ever have led him to derive either pleasure or profit from studies of that order. His apprenticeship left him time enough, as we shall find, for continuing his application to the stores of poetry and romance, and those old chroniclers, who to the end were his darling historians. Indeed, if he had wanted any new stimulus, the necessity of devoting certain hours of every day to a routine of drudgery, however it might have operated on a spirit more prone to earth, must have tended to quicken his appetite for "the sweet bread eaten in secret." But the duties which he had now to fulfil were, in various ways, directly and positively beneficial to the development both of his genius and his character. It was in the discharge of his functions as a Writer's apprentice that he first penetrated into the Highlands, and formed those friendships among the surviving heroes of 1745, which laid the foundation for one great class of his works. Even the less attractive parts of his new vocation were calculated to give him a more complete insight into the smaller workings of poor human nature, than can ever perhaps be gathered from the experience of the legal profession in its higher walk ; the etiquette of the bar in Scotland, as in England, being averse to personal intercourse between the advocate and his client. But, finally, and I will say chiefly, it was to this prosaic discipline that he owed those habits of steady, sober diligence, which few imaginative authors had ever before exemplified—and which, unless thus beaten into his composition at a ductile stage, even he, in all probability, could never

have carried into the almost professional exercise of some of the highest and most delicate faculties of the human mind. He speaks, in not the least remarkable passage of the preceding Memoir, as if constitutional indolence had been his portion in common with all the members of his father's family. When Gifford, in a dispute with Soame Jenyns, quoted Doctor Johnson's own confession that he "knew little Greek," Jenyns answered, "Yes, young man; but how shall we know what Johnson would have called much Greek?" and Gifford has recorded the deep impression which this hint left on his own mind. What Scott would have called constitutional diligence, I know not; but surely if indolence of any kind had been inherent in his nature, even the triumph of Socrates was not more signal than his.

It will be, by some of my friends, considered as trivial to remark on such a circumstance; but the reader who is unacquainted with the professional habits of the Scotch lawyers, may as well be told that the Writer's apprentice receives a certain allowance in money for every page he transcribes; and that, as in those days the greater part of the business, even of the supreme courts, was carried on by means of written papers, a ready penman, in a well-employed chamber, could earn in this way enough at all events to make a handsome addition to the pocket-money which was likely to be thought suitable for a youth of fifteen by such a man as the elder Scott. The allowance being, I believe, threepence for every page containing a certain fixed number of words, when Walter had finished, as he tells us he occasionally did, 120 pages within twenty-four hours, his fee would amount to thirty shillings; and in his early letters I find him more than once congratulating himself on having been, by some such exertion, enabled to purchase a book, or a coin, otherwise beyond his reach. A schoolfellow, who was now, like himself, a Writer's apprentice, recollects the eagerness with which he thus made himself master of Evans's Ballads, shortly after their publication; and another of them, already often referred to, remembers, in particular, his rapture with Meikle's Cumnor Hall, which first appeared in that collection. "After the labours of the day were over," says Mr. Irving, "we often walked in *the Meadows*" (a large field intersected by formal alleys of old trees, adjoining George's Square), "especially in the moonlight nights, and he seemed never weary of repeating the first stanza—

"The dews of summer light did fall—  
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,  
Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall,  
And many an oak that grew thereby."

I have thought it worth while to preserve these reminiscences of his companions at the time, though he has himself stated the circumstance in his Preface to Kenilworth. "There is a period in youth," he there says, "when the mere power of numbers has a more strong effect on ear and imagination than in after life. At this season of immature taste, the author was greatly delighted with the poems of Meikle and Langhorne. The first stanza of Cumnor Hall especially had a peculiar enchantment for his youthful ear—the force of which is not yet (1828) entirely spent."

Thus that favourite elegy, after having dwelt on his memory and imagination for forty years, suggested the subject of one of his noblest romances.

It is affirmed by a preceding biographer, on the authority of one of these brother-apprentices, that about this period Scott showed him a MS. poem on The Conquest of Granada, in four books, each amounting to about 400 lines, which, soon after it was finished, he committed to the flames.\* As he states in his Essay on the Imitation of Popular Poetry, that, for ten years previous to 1796, when his first translation from the German was executed, he had written no verses "except an occasional sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow," I presume this Conquest of Granada, the fruit of his study of the *Guerras Civiles*, must be assigned to the summer of 1786—or, making allowance for trivial inaccuracy, to the next year at latest. It was probably composed in imitation of Meikle's Lusiad: at all events, we have a very distinct statement, that he made no attempts in the manner of the old minstrels, early as his admiration for them had been, until the period of his acquaintance with Burger. Thus with him, as with most others, genius had hazarded many a random effort ere it discovered the true key-note. Long had

"Amid the strings his fingers stray"<sup>1</sup>,  
And an uncertain warbling made,"

before "the measure wild" was caught, and

"In varying cadence, soft or strong,  
He swept the sounding chords along."

His youthful admiration of Langhorne has been rendered memorable by his own record of his first and only interview with his great predecessor, Robert Burns. Although the letter in which he narrates this incident, addressed to myself in 1827, when I was writing a short biography of that poet, has been often reprinted, it is too important for my present purpose to be omitted here.

"As for Burns" (he writes), "I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Fergusson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns' manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his

\* Life of Scott, by Mr. Allan, p. 53.

dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath—

'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain;  
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptized in tears.'

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of "The Justice of the Peace." I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school—*i.e.*, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gude* man who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns' acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models; there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate."

I need not remark on the extent of knowledge, and justice of taste, exemplified in this early measurement of Burns, both as a student of English literature and as a Scottish poet. The print, over which Scott saw

Burns shed tears, is still in the possession of Dr. Fergusson's family, and I had often heard him tell the story, in the room where the precious relic hangs, before I requested him to set it down in writing—how little anticipating the use to which I should ultimately apply it!

His intimacy with Adam (now Sir Adam Fergusson) was his first means of introduction to the higher literary society of Edinburgh, and it was very probably to that connexion that he owed, among the rest, his acquaintance with the blind poet Blacklock, whom Johnson, twelve years earlier, "beheld with reverence." We have seen, however, that the venerable author of *Douglas* was a friend of his own parents, and had noticed him even in his infancy at Bath. John Home now inhabited a villa at no great distance from Edinburgh, and there, all through his young days, Scott was a frequent guest. Nor must it be forgotten that his uncle, Dr. Rutherford, inherited much of the general accomplishments as well as the professional reputation of his father, and that it was beneath that roof he saw, several years before this, Dr. Cartwright, then in the enjoyment of some fame as a poet. In this family, indeed, he had more than one kind and strenuous encourager of his early literary tastes, as will be shown abundantly when we reach certain relics of his correspondence with his mother's sister, Miss Christian Rutherford. Dr. Rutherford's good-natured remonstrances with him, as a boy, for reading at breakfast, are well remembered, and will remind my reader of a similar trait in the juvenile manners both of Burns and Byron; nor was this habit entirely laid aside even in Scott's advanced age.

If he is quite accurate in referring his first acquaintance with the Highlands to his fifteenth year, this incident also belongs to the first season of his apprenticeship. His father had, among a rather numerous list of Highland clients, Alexander Stewart, of Invernahyle, an enthusiastic Jacobite, who had survived to recount, in secure and vigorous old age, his active experiences in the insurrections both of 1715 and 1745. He had, it appears, attracted Walter's attention and admiration at a very early date; for he speaks of having "seen him in arms" and heard him "exult in the prospect of drawing his claymore once more before he died," when Paul Jones threatened a descent on Edinburgh; which transaction occurred in September, 1779. Invernahyle, as Scott adds, was the only person who seemed to have retained possession of his cool senses at the period of that disgraceful alarm, and offered the magistrates to collect as many Highlanders as would suffice for cutting off any part of the pirate's crew that might venture in quest of plunder into a city full of high houses and narrow lanes, and every way well calculated for defence. The eager delight with which the young apprentice now listened to the tales of this fine old man's early days produced an invitation to his residence among the mountains, and to this excursion he probably devoted the few weeks of an autumnal vacation—whether in 1786 or 1787, it is of no great consequence to ascertain.

I need not quote the numerous passages scattered over his writings, both early and late, in which he dwells with fond affection on the chivalrous character of Invernahyle—the delight with which he heard the veteran describe his broadsword duel with Rob Roy—his campaigns with Mar and Charles Edward—and his long seclusion (as pictured in the

story of Bradwardine) within a rocky cave situated not far from his own house, while it was garrisoned by a party of English soldiers, after the battle of Culloden. Here, too, still survived the trusty henchman who had attended the chieftain in many a bloody field and perilous escape, the same "grim-looking old Highlander" who was in the act of cutting down Colonel Whiteford with his Lochaber axe at Prestonpans when his master arrested the blow—an incident to which Invernahyle owed his life, and we are indebted for another of the most striking pages in Waverley.

That he entered with ready zeal into such professional business as inferred Highland expeditions with comrades who had known Rob Roy, no one will think strange; but more than one of his biographers allege, that in the ordinary indoor faggot of the chamber in George's Square, he was always an unwilling, and rarely an efficient, assistant. Their addition that he often played chess with one of his companions in the office, and had to conceal the board with precipitation when the old gentleman's footsteps were heard on the staircase, is, I do not doubt, true; and we may remember along with it his own insinuation that his father was sometimes poring in his secret nook over Spottiswoode or Wodrow when his apprentices supposed him to be deep in Dirleton's Doubts or Stair's Decisions. But the Memoir of 1808, so candid—indeed, more than candid—as to many juvenile irregularities, contains no confession that supports the broad assertion to which I have alluded; nor can I easily believe, that with his affection for his father, and that sense of duty which seems to have been inherent in his character, and, lastly, with the evidence of a most severe training in industry which the habits of his after life presented, it is at all deserving of serious acceptance. His mere handwriting, indeed, continued, during the whole of his prime, to afford most striking and irresistible proof how completely he must have submitted himself for some very considerable period to the mechanical discipline of his father's office. It spoke to months after months of this humble toil, as distinctly as the illegible scrawl of Lord Byron did to his self-mastership from the hour that he left Harrow. There are some little technical tricks, such as no gentleman who has not been subjected to a similar regimen ever can fall into, which he practised invariably while composing his poetry, which appear not unfrequently on the MSS. of his best novels, and which now and then dropped instinctively from his pen, even in the private letters and diaries of his closing years. I allude particularly to a sort of flourish at the bottom of the page, originally, I presume, adopted in engrossing as a safeguard against the intrusion of a forged line between the legitimate text and the attesting signature. He was quite sensible that this ornament might as well be dispensed with; and his family often heard him mutter, after involuntarily performing it, "There goes the old shop again!"

I dwell on this matter, because it was always his favourite tenet, in contradiction to what he called the cant of sonneteers, that there is no necessary connection between genius and an aversion or contempt for any of the common duties of life; he thought, on the contrary, that to spend some fair portion of every day in any matter-of-fact occupation is good for the higher faculties themselves in the upshot. In a word, from be-

ginning to end, he piqued himself on being *a man of business*; and did—with one sad and memorable exception—whatever the ordinary course of things threw in his way, in exactly the business-like fashion which might have been expected from the son of a thoroughbred old Clerk to the Signet, who had never deserted his father's profession.

In the winter of 1788, however, his apprentice habits were exposed to a new danger; and from that date I believe them to have undergone a considerable change. He was then sent to attend the lectures of the Professor of Civil Law in the University, this course forming part of the usual professional education of Writers to the Signet, as well as of Advocates. For some time his companions, when in Edinburgh, had been chiefly, almost solely, his brother apprentices and the clerks in his father's office. He had latterly seen comparatively little even of the better of his old High School friends, such as Fergusson and Irving—for though both of these also were Writers' apprentices, they had been indentured to other masters, and each had naturally formed new intimacies within his own chamber. The Civil Law class brought him again into daily contact with both Irving and Fergusson, as well as others of his earlier acquaintance of the higher ranks; but it also led him into the society of some young gentlemen previously unknown to him, who had from the outset been destined for the bar, and whose conversation, tinged with certain prejudices natural to scions of what he calls in *Redgauntlet* the *Scottish noblesse de la robe*, soon banished from his mind every thought of ultimately adhering to the secondary branch of the law. He found these future barristers cultivating general literature without any apprehension that such elegant pursuits could be regarded by any one as interfering with the proper studies of their professional career; justly believing, on the contrary, that for the higher class of forensic exertion some acquaintance with almost every branch of science and letters is a necessary preparative. He contrasted their liberal aspirations, and the encouragement which these received in their domestic circles, with the narrower views which predominated in his own home, and resolved to gratify his ambition by adopting a most precarious walk in life, instead of adhering to that in which he might have counted with perfect security on the early attainment of pecuniary independence. This resolution appears to have been foreseen by his father, long before it was announced in terms; and the handsome manner in which the old gentleman conducted himself upon the occasion is remembered with dutiful gratitude in the preceding Autobiography.

The most important of these new alliances was the intimate friendship which he now formed with William Clerk of Eldin, of whose powerful talents and extensive accomplishments we shall hereafter meet with many enthusiastic notices. It was in company with this gentleman that he entered the debating societies described in his Memoir; through him he soon became linked in the closest intimacy with George Cranstoun (now Lord Corehouse), George Abercromby (now Lord Abercromby), Sir Patrick Murray of Ochtertyre, John James Edmonstone of Newton, Patrick Murray of Simprin, and a group of other young men, all high in birth and connexion, and all remarkable in early life for the qualities which afterwards led them to eminent station, or adorned it. The in-

introduction to their several families is alluded to by Scott as having opened to him abundantly certain advantages, which no one could have been more qualified to improve, but from which he had hitherto been in great measure debarred in consequence of the retired habits of his parents.

Mr. Clerk says that he had been struck from the first day he entered the Civil Law class-room with something odd and remarkable in Scott's appearance; what this something was he cannot now recall, but he remembers telling his companion some time afterwards that he thought he looked like a *hautboy-player*. Scott was amused with this notion, as he had never touched any musical instrument of any kind; but I fancy his friend had been watching a certain noticeable, but altogether indescribable, play of the upper lip when in an abstracted mood. He rallied Walter, he says, during one of their first evening walks together, on the slovenliness of his dress; he wore a pair of corduroy breeches, much glazed by the rubbing of his staff, which he immediately flourished and said, "They be good enough for drimking in; let us go and have some oysters in the Covenant Close."

Convivial habits were then indulged among the young men of Edinburgh, whether students of law, writers, or barristers, to an extent now happily unknown; and this anecdote recalls some striking hints on that subject which occur in Scott's brief Autobiography. That he partook profusely in the juvenile bacchanalia of that day, and continued to take a plentiful share in such jollities down to the time of his marriage, are facts worthy of being distinctly stated—for no man in mature life was more habitually averse to every sort of intemperance. He could, when I first knew him, swallow a great quantity of wine without being at all visibly disordered by it; but nothing short of some very particular occasion could ever induce him to put this strength of head to a trial; and I have heard him many times utter words which no one in the days of his youthful temptation can be the worse for remembering—"Depend upon it, of all vices drinking is the most incompatible with greatness."

The liveliness of his conversation, the strange variety of his knowledge, and, above all, perhaps, the portentous tenacity of his memory, riveted more and more Clerk's attention, and commanded the wonder of all his new allies; but of these extraordinary gifts Scott himself appeared to be little conscious; or at least he impressed them all as attaching infinitely greater consequence (exactly as had been the case with him in the days of the Cowgate Port and the *little nine steps*) to feats of personal agility and prowess. William Clerk's brother James, a midshipman in the navy, happened to come home from a cruise in the Mediterranean shortly after this acquaintance began, and Scott and the sailor became almost at sight "sworn brothers." In order to complete his time under the late Sir Alexander Cochrane, who was then on the Leith station, James Clerk obtained the command of a lugger, and the young friends often made little excursions to sea with him. "The first time Scott dined on board," says William Clerk, "we met before embarking at a tavern in Leith—it was a large party, mostly midshipmen, and strangers to him, and our host, introducing his landmen guests, said, 'My brother you know, gentlemen; as for Mr. Scott, mayhaps you may take him for a poor lamiter, but he is the first to begin a row, and the

last to end it ;' which eulogium he confirmed with some of the expletives of Tom Pipes.\* When, many years afterwards, Clerk read *The Pirate*, he was startled by the resurrection of a hundred traits of the talk of this lugger ; but the author has since traced some of the most striking passages in that novel to his recollection of the almost childish period when he hung on his own brother Robert's stories about Rodney's battles and the haunted *keys* of the West Indies.

One morning Scott called on Clerk, and, exhibiting his stick all cut and marked, told him he had been attacked in the streets the night before by three fellows, against whom he had defended himself for an hour. "By Shrewsbury clock?" said his friend. "No," says Scott, smiling, "by the Tron." But thenceforth, adds Mr. Clerk, and for twenty years after, he called his walking stick by the name of "Shrewsbury."

With these comrades Scott now resumed, and pushed to a much greater extent, his early habits of wandering over the country in quest of castles and other remains of antiquity, his passion for which derived a new impulse from the conversation of the celebrated John Clerk of Eldin,† the father of his friend. William Clerk well remembers his father telling a story which was introduced in due time in *The Antiquary*. While he was visiting his grandfather, Sir John Clerk, at Dumcreiff, in Dumfriesshire, many years before this time, the old baronet carried some English virtuosos to see a supposed Roman camp ; and on his exclaiming at a particular spot, "this I take to have been the *Prætorium*," a herdsman, who stood by, answered, "*Prætorium* here, *Prætorium* there, I made it wi' a slaughter spade."‡ Many traits of the elder Clerk were, his son has no doubt, embroidered on the character of George Constable in the composition of Jonathan Oldbuck. The old gentleman's enthusiasm for antiquities was often played on by these young friends, but more effectually by his eldest son, John Clerk (Lord Eldin), who, having a great genius for art, used to amuse himself with manufacturing mutilated heads, which, after being buried for a convenient time in the ground, were accidentally discovered in some fortunate hour, and received by the laird with great honour as valuable accessions to his museum.§

On a fishing excursion to a loch near Howgate, among the Moorfoot Hills, Scott, Clerk, Irving, and Abercromby spent the night at a little public house kept by one Mrs. Margaret Dods. When *St. Ronan's Well* was published, Clerk, meeting Scott in the street, observed, "That's an old name ; surely I have met with it somewhere before." Scott smiled, and, "Don't you remember Howgate?" and passed on. The name alone, however, was taken from the Howgate hostess.

At one of their drinking bouts of those days, William Clerk, Sir P.

\* "Dinna steer him," says Hobbie Elliot ; "ye may think Elshie's but a lamiter, but I warrant ye, grippie for grippie, he'll gar the blue blood spin frae your nails ; his hand's like a smith's vice."—*Black Dwarf—Waverley Novels*, vol. ix. p. 202.

† Author of the famous Essay on Dividing the Line in Sea Fights.

‡ Compare *The Antiquary*, vol. i. p. 49.

§ The most remarkable of these *antique heads* was so highly appreciated by another distinguished connoisseur, the late Earl of Buchan, that he carried it off from Mr. Clerk's museum, and presented it to the Scottish Society of Antiquaries—up whose collection, no doubt, it may still be admired.

Murray, Edmonstone, and Abercromby being of the party, the sitting was prolonged to a very late hour, and Scott fell asleep. When he awoke, his friends succeeded in convincing him that he had sung a song in the course of the evening, and sung it extremely well. How must these gentlemen have chuckled when they read Frank Osbaldistone's account of his revels in the old hall!—"It has even been reported by maligners that I sung a song while under this vinous influence; but as I remember nothing of it, and never attempted to turn a tune in all my life, either before or since, I would willingly hope there is no actual foundation for the calumny."\*

On one of his first long walks with Clerk and others of the same set, their pace being about four miles an hour, was found rather too much for Scott, and he offered to contract for three, which measure was thenceforth considered as the legal one. At this rate they often continued to wander from five in the morning till eight in the evening, halting for such refreshment at midday as any village alehouse might afford. On many occasions, however, they had stretched so far into the country, that they were obliged to be absent from home all night; and though great was the alarm which the first occurrence of this sort created in George's Square, the family soon got accustomed to such things, and little notice was taken even though Walter remained away for the better part of a week. I have heard him laugh heartily over the recollections of one protracted excursion, towards the close of which the party found themselves a long day's walk—thirty miles, I think—from Edinburgh, without a single sixpence left among them. "We were put to our shifts," said he; "but we asked every now and then at a cottage door for a drink of water; and one or two of the goodwives, observing our worn-out looks, brought forth milk in place of water—so with that, and hips and haws, we came in little the worse." His father met him with some impatient questions as to what he had been living on so long, for the old man well knew how scantily his pocket was supplied. "Pretty much like the young ravens," answered he. "I only wished I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. If I had his art, I should like nothing better than to tramp like him from cottage to cottage over the world."—"I doubt," said the grave Clerk to the Signet, "I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a *gangrel scrape-gut*." Some allusions to reproaches of this kind occur in the *Memoir*, and we find others in letters subsequent to his admission at the bar.

The debating club formed among these young friends at this era of their studies was called *The Literary Society*, and is not to be confounded with the more celebrated *Speculative Society*, which Scott did not join for two years later. At *The Literary* he spoke frequently, and very amusingly and sensibly, but was not at all numbered among the most brilliant members. He had a world of knowledge to produce; but he had not acquired the art of arranging it to the best advantage in a continued address; nor, indeed, did he ever, I think, except under the influence of strong personal feeling, even when years and fame had given him full confidence in himself, exhibit upon any occasion the powers of oral

\* Rob Roy, Waverley Novels, vol. vii. p. 182

eloquence. His antiquarian information, however, supplied many an interesting feature in these evenings of discussion. He had already dabbled in Anglo-Saxon and the Norse Sagas: in his *Essay on Imitations of Popular Poetry* he alludes to these studies as having facilitated his acquisition of German. But he was deep especially in Fordun and Wyn-toun, and all the Scotch chronicles; and his friends rewarded him by the honourable title of *Duns Scotus*.

A smaller society, formed with less ambitious views, originated in a ride to Pennycuik, the seat of the head of Mr. Clerk's family, whose elegant hospitalities are recorded in the Memoir. This was called, by way of excellence, *The Club*, and I believe it is continued under the same name to this day. Here, too, Walter had his *sobriquet*; and—his corduroy breeches, I presume, not being as yet worn out—it was *Colonel Grogg*.\*

It appears from James Ballantyne's *memoranda*, that having been very early bound apprentice to a solicitor in Kelso, he had no intercourse with Scott during the three or four years that followed their companionship at the school of Lancelot Whale; but Ballantyne was now sent to spend a winter in Edinburgh for the completion of his professional education, and in the course of his attendance on the Scots Law class, became a member of a young Teviotdale club, where Walter Scott seldom failed to make his appearance. They supped together, it seems, once a month; and here, as in the associations above mentioned, good fellowship was often pushed beyond the limits of modern indulgence. The strict intimacy between Scott and Ballantyne was not at this time renewed—their avocations prevented it.

It was about 1790, according to Mr. William Clerk, that Scott was observed to lay aside that carelessness, not to say slovenliness, as to dress, which used to furnish matter for joking at the beginning of their acquaintance. He now did himself more justice in these little matters, became fond of mixing in general female society, and, as his friend expresses it, "began to set up for a squire of dames."

His personal appearance at this time was not unengaging. A lady of

\* "The members of *The Club* used to meet on Friday evenings in a room in Carrubber's Close, from which some of them usually adjourned to sup at an oyster tavern in the same neighbourhood. In after life those of them who chanced to be in Edinburgh dined together twice every year, at the close of the winter and summer sessions of the Law Courts; and during thirty years Sir Walter was very rarely absent on these occasions. It was also a rule, that when any member received an appointment or promotion, he should give a dinner to his old associates; and they had accordingly two such dinners from him—one when he became Sheriff of Selkirkshire, and another when he was named Clerk of Session. The original members were, in number, nineteen—viz., *Sir Walter Scott*, Mr. William Clerk, Sir A. Ferguson, Mr. James Edmonstone, Mr. George Abercromby (Lord Abercromby), Mr. D. Boyle (now Lord Justice-Clerk), Mr. James Glassford (Advocate), Mr. James Ferguson (Clerk of Session), Mr. David Monypenny (Lord Pitmilny), Mr. Robert Davidson (Professor of Law at Glasgow), Sir William Rae, Bart., Sir Patrick Murray, Bart., *David Douglas* (Lord Reston), Mr. Murray of Simprin, Mr. Monteath of Closeburn, *Mr. Archibald Miller* (son of Professor Miller), *Baron Reden*, a Hanoverian; the Honourable *Thomas Douglas*, afterwards Earl of Selkirk, and John Irving. Except the five whose names *underlined*, these original members are all still alive."—*Letter from Mr. Irving, dated 29th September, 1886.*

high rank, who well remembers him in the Old Assembly Rooms, says, "Young Walter Scott was a comely creature." He had outgrown the sallowness of early ill health, and had a fresh brilliant complexion. His eyes were clear, open, and well set, with a changeful radiance, to which teeth of the most perfect regularity and whiteness lent their assistance, while the noble expanse and elevation of the brow gave to the whole aspect a dignity far above the charm of mere features. His smile was always delightful; and I can easily fancy the peculiar intermixture of tenderness and gravity with playful innocent hilarity and humour in the expression, as being well calculated to fix a fair lady's eye. His figure, excepting the blemish in one limb, must in those days have been eminently handsome; tall, much above the usual standard, it was cast in the very mould of a young Hercules, the head set on with singular grace, the throat and chest after the truest model of the antique, the hands delicately finished, the whole outline that of extraordinary vigour, without as yet a touch of clumsiness. When he had acquired a little facility of manner, his conversation must have been such as could have dispensed with any exterior advantages, and certainly brought swift forgiveness for the one unkindness of nature. I have heard him, in talking of this part of his life, say, with an arch simplicity of look and tone which those who were familiar with him can fill in for themselves, "It was a proud night with me when I first found that a pretty young woman could think it worth her while to sit and talk with me, hour after hour, in a corner of the ball-room, while all the world were capering in our view."

I believe, however, that the "pretty young woman" here specially alluded to had occupied his attention long before he ever appeared in the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms, or any of his friends took note of him as "setting up for a squire of dames." I have been told that their acquaintance began in the Greyfriars' Churchyard, where rain beginning to fall one Sunday as the congregation were dispersing, Scott happened to offer his umbrella, and the tender being accepted, so escorted her to her residence, which proved to be at no great distance from his own. To return from church together had, it seems, grown into something like a custom, before they met in society, Mrs. Scott being of the party. It then appeared that she and the lady's mother had been companions in their youth, though, both living secludedly, they had scarcely seen each other for many years; and the two matrons now renewed their former intercourse. But no acquaintance appears to have existed between the fathers of the young people, until things had advanced in appearance further than met the approbation of the good Clerk to the Signet.

Being aware that the young lady, who was very highly connected, had prospects of fortune far above his son's, the upright and honourable man conceived it his duty to give her parents warning that he observed a degree of intimacy which, if allowed to go on, might involve the parties in future pain and disappointment. He had heard his son talk of a contemplated excursion to the part of the country in which his neighbour's estates lay, and not doubting that Walter's real object was different from that which he announced, introduced himself with a frank statement that he wished no such affair to proceed without the express sanction of those most interested in the happiness of persons as yet too young to

calculate consequences for themselves. The northern baronet had heard nothing of the young apprentice's intended excursion, and appeared to treat the whole business very lightly. He thanked Mr. Scott for his scrupulous attention—but added, that he believed he was mistaken; and this paternal interference, which Walter did not hear of till long afterwards, produced no change in his relations with the object of his growing attachment.

I have neither the power nor the wish to give in detail the sequel of this story. It is sufficient to say, that after he had through several long years nourished the dream of an ultimate union with this lady, his hopes terminated in her being married to a gentleman of the highest character to whom some affectionate allusions occur in one of the greatest of his works, and who lived to act the part of a most generous friend to his early rival throughout the anxieties and distresses of 1826 and 1827. I may add, that I have no doubt this unfortunate passion, besides one good effect already adverted to, had a powerful influence in nerving Scott's mind for the sedulous diligence with which he pursued his proper legal studies, as described in his Memoir, during the two or three years that preceded his call to the bar.

On the 4th January, 1791, Scott was admitted a member of *The Speculative Society*, where it had, long before, been the custom of those about to be called to the bar, and those who, after assuming the gown, were left in possession of leisure by the solicitors, to train or exercise themselves in the arts of elocution and debate. From time to time each member produces an essay, and his treatment of his subject is then discussed by the conclave. Scott's essays were, for November, 1791, "On the Origin of the Feudal System;" for the 14th February, 1792, "On the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems;" and on the 11th December of the same year, he read one "On the Origin of the Scandinavian Mythology."

He took, for several winters, an ardent interest in this society. Very soon after his admission (18th January, 1791), he was elected their librarian; and in the November following he became also their secretary and treasurer; all which appointments indicate the reliance placed on his careful habits of business, the fruit of his chamber education. The minutes kept in his handwriting attest the strict regularity of his attention to the small affairs, literary and financial, of the club; but they show also, as do all his early letters, a strange carelessness in spelling. His constant good temper softened the asperities of debate; while his multifarious lore, and the quaint humour with which he enlivened its display, made him more a favourite as a speaker than some whose powers of rhetoric were far above his.

Lord Jeffrey remembers being struck, the first night he spent at the Speculative, with the singular appearance of the secretary, who sat gravely at the bottom of the table in a huge woollen nightcap; and when the president took the chair, pleaded a bad toothache as his apology for coming into that worshipful assembly in such a "portentous machine." He read that night an essay on ballads, which so much interested the new member that he requested to be introduced to him. Mr. Jeffrey called on him next evening, and found him "in a small den, on the sunk floor of his father's house in George's Square, surrounded with dingy books," from

which they adjourned to a tavern, and supped together. Such was the commencement of an acquaintance, which by degrees ripened into friendship, between the two most distinguished men of letters whom Edinburgh produced in their time. I may add here the description of that early *den*, with which I am favoured by a lady of Scott's family. "Walter had soon begun to collect out-of-the-way things of all sorts. He had more books than shelves; a small painted cabinet, with Scotch and Roman coins in it, and so forth. A claymore and Lochaber axe, given him by old Invernahyle, mounted guard on a little print of Prince Charlie; and *Broughton's Saucer* was hooked up against the wall below it." Such was the germ of the magnificent library and museum of Abbotsford; and such were the "new realms" in which he, on taking possession, had arranged his little paraphernalia about him "with all the feelings of novelty and liberty." Since those days the habits of life in Edinburgh, as elsewhere, have undergone many changes, and the "convenient parlour" in which Scott first showed Jeffrey his collections of minstrelsy, is now, in all probability, thought hardly good enough for a menial's sleeping-room.

But I have forgotten to explain *Broughton's Saucer*. We read of Mr. Saunders Fairford, that though "an elder of the kirk, and of course zealous for King George and the Government," yet, having "many clients and connexions of business among families of opposite political tenets, he was particularly cautious to use all the conventional phrases which the civility of the time had devised as an admissible mode of language betwixt the two parties. Thus he spoke sometimes of the Chevalier, but never either of the *Prince*, which would have been sacrificing his own principles, or of the *Pretender*, which would have been offensive to those of others. Again, he usually designated the Rebellion as the *affair* of 1745, and spoke of any one engaged in it as a person who had been *out* at a certain period—so that, on the whole, he was much liked and respected on all sides."\* All this was true of Mr. Walter Scott, W.S.; but I have often heard his son tell an anecdote of him which he dwelt on with particular satisfaction, as illustrative of the man, and of the difficult time through which he had lived.

Mrs. Scott's curiosity was strongly excited one autumn by the regular appearance, at a certain hour every evening, of a sedan chair, to deposit a person carefully muffled up in a mantle, who was immediately ushered into her husband's private room, and commonly remained with him there until long after the usual bed-time of this orderly family. Mr. Scott answered her repeated inquiries with a vagueness which irritated the lady's feelings more and more; until, at last, she could bear the thing no longer; but one evening, just as she heard the bell ring as for the stranger's chair to carry him off, she made her appearance within the forbidden parlour with a salver in her hand, observing, that she thought the gentlemen had sat so long they would be the better of a dish of tea, and had ventured accordingly to bring some for their acceptance. The stranger, a person of distinguished appearance, and richly dressed, bowed to the lady, and accepted a cup; but her husband knit his brows and refused very coldly to partake the refreshment. A moment afterwards

\* Redgauntlet, vol. i. p. 244.

the visitor withdrew—and Mr. Scott, lifting up the window-sash, took the cup, which he had left empty on the table, and tossed it out upon the pavement. The lady exclaimed for her china, but was put to silence by her husband's saying, "I can forgive your little curiosity, madam, but you must pay the penalty. I may admit into my house, on a piece of business, persons wholly unworthy to be treated as guests by my wife. Neither lip of me nor of mine comes after Mr. Murray of Broughton's."

This was the unhappy man who, after attending Prince Charles Stuart as his secretary throughout the greater part of his expedition, condescended to redeem his own life and fortune by bearing evidence against the noblest of his late master's adherents, when

"Pitied by gentle hearts Kilmarnock died—  
The brave, Balmerino, were on thy side."

When first confronted with the last-named peer before the Privy Council in St. James's, the prisoner was asked, "Do you know this witness, my lord?" "Not I," answered Balmerino; "I once knew a person who bore the designation of Murray of Broughton; but that was a gentleman and a man of honour, and one that could hold up his head!"

The saucer belonging to Broughton's teacup had been preserved, and Walter, at a very early period, made prize of it. One can fancy young Alan Fairford pointing significantly to the relic when Mr. Saunders was vouchsafing him one of his customary lectures about listening with unseemly sympathy to "the blawing, bleezing stories which the Hieland gentlemen told of those troublous times."\*

Mr. Clerk assures me that nothing could be more exact (excepting as to a few petty circumstances introduced for obvious reasons) than the resemblance of the Mr. Saunders Fairford of Redgauntlet to his friend's father:—"He was a man of business of the old school, moderate in his charges, economical, and even niggardly in his expenditure; strictly honest in conducting his own affairs and those of his clients; but taught by long experience to be wary and suspicious in observing the motions of others. Punctual as the clock of St. Giles tolled nine" (the hour at which the Court of Session meets), "the dapper form of the hale old gentleman was seen at the threshold of the court hall, or at farthest at the head of the Back Stairs" (the most convenient access to the Parliament House from George's Square), "trimly dressed in a complete suit of snuff-coloured brown, with stockings of silk or woollen, as suited the weather, a bob wig and a small cocked hat; shoes blacked as Warren would have blacked them; silver shoe-buckles, and a gold stock-buckle. His manners corresponded with his attire, for they were scrupulously civil, and not a little formal . . . . On the whole, he was a man much liked and respected, though his friends would not have been sorry if he had given a dinner more frequently, as his little cellar contained some choice old wine, of which, on such rare occasions, he was no niggard. The whole pleasure of this good old-fashioned man of method, besides that which he really felt in the discharge of his own daily business, was the hope to see his son attain what in the father's eyes was the proudest of all dis-

\* Redgauntlet, vol. i. p. 142.

tinctions—the rank and fame of a well-employed lawyer. Every profession has its peculiar honours, and his mind was constructed upon so limited and exclusive a plan, that he valued nothing save the objects of ambition\* which his own presented. He would have shuddered at his son's acquiring the renown of a hero, and laughed with scorn at the equally barren laurels of literature; it was by the path of the law alone that he was desirous to see him rise to eminence; and the probabilities of success or disappointment were the thoughts of his father by day, and his dream by night.”\*

It is easy to imagine the original of this portrait, writing to one of his friends, about the end of June, 1792,—“I have the pleasure to tell you that my son has passed his private Scots Law examinations with good approbation—a great relief to my mind, especially as worthy Mr. Pest told me in my ear, there was no fear of the ‘callant,’ as he familiarly called him, which gives me great heart. His public trials, which are nothing in comparison save a mere form, are to take place, by order of the Honourable Dean of Faculty,† on Wednesday first, and on Friday he puts on the gown, and gives a bit chack of dinner to his friends and acquaintances, as is the custom. Your company will be wished for there by more than him.—P.S.—His thesis is, on the title, ‘*De periculo et commodo rei venditæ*,’ and is a very pretty piece of Latinity.”‡

And all things passed in due order, even as they are figured. The real *Darsie* was present at the real Alan Fairford's “bit chack of dinner,” and the old Clerk of the Signet was very joyous on the occasion. Scott's thesis was, in fact, on the Title of the Pandects, Concerning the disposal of the dead bodies of criminals. It was dedicated, I doubt not by the careful father's advice, to his friend and neighbour in George's Square, the coarsely humorous, but acute and able, and still well-remembered, Macqueen of Braxfield, then Lord Justice-Clerk (or President of the Supreme Criminal Court) of Scotland.

I have often heard both *Alan* and *Darsie* laugh over their reminiscences of the important day when they “put on the gown.” After the ceremony was completed, and they had mingled for some time with the crowd of barristers in the Outer Court, Scott said to his comrade, mimicking the air and tone of a Highland lass waiting at the cross of Edinburgh to be hired for the harvest work, “We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, and diel a ane has speered our price.” Some friendly solicitor, however, gave him a guinea fee before the Court rose; and as they walked down the High Street together, he said to Mr. Clerk, in passing a hosier's shop, “This is a sort of a wedding-day, Willie. I think I must go in and buy me a new nightcap.” He did so accordingly; perhaps this was Lord Jeffrey's “portentous machine.” His first fee of any consequence, however, was expended on a silver taper-stand for his mother, which the old lady used to point to with great satisfaction, as it stood on her chimney-piece five and twenty years afterwards.

Scott was called to the bar only the day before the closing of the session, and he appears to have almost immediately escaped to the country.

\* Redgauntlet, vol. i. p. 243-5.

† The situation of Dean of Faculty was filled in 1792 by the Honourable Henry Erskine, of witty and benevolent memory.

‡ Redgauntlet, vol. i. p. 144.

On the 2nd of August I find his father writing, "I have sent the copies of your *thesis* as desired ;" and on the 15th he addressed to him at Rosebank a letter, in which there is this paragraph, an undoubted autograph of Mr Saunders Fairford, *anno ætatis* sixty-three.

"DEAR WALTER,—

" . . . I am glad that your expedition to the west proved agreeable. You do well to warn your mother against Ashestiel. Although I said little, yet I never thought that road could be agreeable ; besides, it is taking too wide a circle. Lord Justice-Clerk is in town attending the Bills. He called here yesterday, and inquired very particularly for you. I told him where you was, and he expects to see you at Jedburgh upon the 21st. He is to be at Mellerstain on the 20th, and will be there all night. His lordship said, in a very pleasant manner, that something might cast up at Jedburgh to give you an opportunity of appearing, and that he would insist upon it, and that in future he meant to give you a share of the criminal business in this Court, all which is very kind. I told his lordship that I had dissuaded you from appearing at Jedburgh, but he said I was wrong in doing so, and I therefore leave the matter to you and him. *I think it is probable he will breakfast with Sir H. H. Mac-Dougall on the 21st, on his way to Jedburgh.*"

This last quiet hint, that the young lawyer might as well be at Makerstoun (the seat of a relation) when *his lordship* breakfasted there, and of course swell the train of his lordship's little procession into the county town, seems delightfully characteristic. I think I hear Sir Walter himself lecturing *me*, when in the same sort of situation, thirty years afterwards. He declined the opportunity of making his first appearance on this occasion at Jedburgh.

While attending the Michaelmas Head-Court, as an annual county meeting is called, at Jedburgh, he was introduced, by an old companion, Charles Kerr of Abbotrule, to Mr. Robert Shortreed, that gentleman's near relation, who spent the greater part of his life in the enjoyment of much respect as Sheriff-Substitute of Roxburghshire. Scott had been expressing his wish to visit the then wild and inaccessible district of Liddesdale, particularly with a view to examine the ruins of the famous castle of Hermitage, and to pick up some of the ancient *riding ballads*, said to be still preserved among the descendants of the moss-troopers, who had followed the banner of the Douglasses, when lords of that grim and remote fastness. Mr. Shortreed had many connexions in Liddesdale, and knew its passes well, and he was pointed out as the very guide the young advocate wanted. They started accordingly, in a day or two afterwards, from Abbotrule ; and the laird meant to have been of the party ; but "it was well for him," said Shortreed, "that he changed his mind, for he could never have done as we did."

During seven successive years Scott made a *raid*, as he called it, into Liddesdale, with Mr. Shortreed for his guide ; exploring every rivulet to its source, and every ruined *peel* from foundation to battlement. At this time no wheeled carriage had ever been seen in the district—the first, indeed, that ever appeared there was a gig, driven by Scott himself

for a part of his way, when on the last of these seven excursions. There was no inn nor public house of any kind in the whole valley; the travellers passed from the shepherd's hut to the minister's manse, and again from the cheerful hospitality of the manse to the rough and jolly welcome of the homestead; gathering, wherever they went, songs and tunes, and occasionally more tangible relics of antiquity—even such “a rowth of auld nicknackets” as Burns ascribes to Captain Grose. To these rambles Scott owed much of the materials of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*; and not less of that intimate acquaintance with the living manners of these unsophisticated regions, which constitutes the chief charm of one of the most charming of his prose works. But how soon he had any definite object before him in his researches seems very doubtful.

In November, 1792, Scott and Clerk began their regular attendance at the Parliament House, and Scott, to use Mr. Clerk's words, “by-and-by crept into a tolerable share of such business as may be expected from a Writer's connexion.” By this we are to understand that he was employed from time to time by his father, and probably a few other solicitors, in that dreary every-day taskwork, chiefly of long written *informations*, and other papers for the Court, on which young counsellors of the Scotch bar were then expected to bestow a great deal of trouble for very scanty pecuniary remuneration, and with scarcely a chance of finding reserved for their hands any matter that could elicit the display of superior knowledge or understanding. He had also his part in the cases of persons suing *in forma pauperis*; but how little important those that came to his share were, and how slender was the impression they had left on his mind, we may gather from a note on *Redgauntlet*, wherein he signifies his doubts whether he really had ever been engaged in what he has certainly made the *cause célèbre* of *Poor Peter Peebles*.

But he soon became as famous for his powers of story-telling among the lawyers of the Outer House, as he had been among the companions of his High School days. The place where these idlers mostly congregated, was called, it seems, by a name which sufficiently marks the date—it was *the Mountain*. Here, as Roger North says of the Court of King's Bench in his early day, “there was more News than Law;”—here hour after hour passed away, week after week, month after month, and year after year, in the interchange of light-hearted merriment, among a circle of young men, more than one of whom, in after times, attained the highest honours of the profession. Among the most intimate of Scott's daily associates from this time, and during all his subsequent attendance at the bar, were, besides various since eminent persons that have been already named, the first legal antiquary of our time in Scotland, Mr. Thomas Thompson, and William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinnedder. Mr. Clerk remembers complaining one morning on finding the group convulsed with laughter, that *Duns Scotus* had been forestalling him in a good story, which he had communicated privately the day before—adding, moreover, that his friend had not only stolen, but disguised it. “Why,” answered he, skillfully waiving the main charge, “this is always the way with *the Baronet*.\* He is continually saying that I change his

\* A nickname for Clerk between the friends.

stories, whereas, in fact, I only put a cocked hat on their heads, and stick a cane into their hands, to make them fit for going into company.\*

The German class, of which we have an account in one of the Prefaces of 1830, was formed before the Christmas of 1792, and it included almost all these loungers of *the Mountain*.

These studies were much encouraged by the example, and assisted by the advice, of an accomplished person, considerably Scott's superior in standing, Alexander Fraser Tytler, afterwards a Judge of the Court of Session by the title of Lord Woodhouselee. His version of Schiller's *Robbers* was one of the earliest from the German theatre, and no doubt stimulated his young friend to his first experiments in the same walk.

From the beginning, also, Scott had in William Erskine a monitor who—entering most warmly into his taste for national lore—the life of the past, and the bold and picturesque style of the original English school—was constantly urging the advantages to be derived from combining with its varied and masculine breadth of delineation such attention to the minor graces of arrangement and diction as might conciliate the fastidiousness of modern taste.

These German studies divided Scott's attention with the business of the Courts of Law, on which he was at least a regular attendant during the winter of 1792-3.

If the preceding autumn forms a remarkable point in Scott's history, as first introducing him to the manners of the wilder Border country, the summer which followed left traces of equal importance. He gave the greater part of it to an excursion which much extended his knowledge of Highland scenery and character; and in particular furnished him with the richest stores which he afterwards turned to account in one of the most beautiful of his great poems, and in several, including the first, of his prose romances.

Accompanied by Adam Fergusson, he visited on this occasion some of the finest districts of Stirlingshire and Perthshire; and not in the percursor manner of his more boyish expeditions, but taking up his residence for a week or ten days in succession at the family residences of several of his young allies, and from thence familiarizing himself at leisure with the country and the people round about. In this way he lingered some time at Tullibody, the seat of the father of Sir Ralph Abercromby, and grandfather of his friend Mr. George Abercromby (now Lord Abercromby); and heard from the old gentleman's own lips his narrative of a journey which he had been obliged to make, shortly after he first settled in Stirlingshire, to the wild retreat of Rob Roy. The venerable laird told how he was received by the cateran "with much courtesy," in a cavern exactly such as that of *Bean Lean*; dined on collops cut from some of his own cattle, which he recognized hanging by their heels from the rocky roof beyond; and returned in all safety, after concluding a bargain of *black-mail*—in virtue of which annual payment Rob Roy guaranteed the future security of his herds against, not his own followers merely, but all freebooters whatever. Scott next visited his friend Edmonstone, at Newton, a beautiful seat close to the ruins of the once magnificent castle of Doune, and heard another aged gentleman's vivid recollections of all that happened there when John

Home, the author of Douglas, and other Hanoverian prisoners, escaped from the Highland garrison in 1745.\* Proceeding towards the sources of the Teith, he was received for the first time under a roof which, in subsequent years, he regularly revisited, that of another of his associates, Buchanan, the young laird of Cambusmore. It was thus that the scenery of Loch Katrine came to be so associated with "the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days," that to compose the *Lady of the Lake* was "a labour of love, and no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced."† It was starting from the same house, when the poem itself had made some progress, that he put to the test the practicability of riding from the banks of Lochvennachar to the castle of Stirling within the brief space which he had assigned to Fitz-James's Grey Bayard, after the duel with Roderick Dhu; and the principal landmarks in the description of that fiery progress are so many hospitable mansions all familiar to him at the same period—Blairdrummond, the residence of Lord Kaim; Ochtertyre, that of John Ramsay, the scholar and antiquarian (now best remembered for his kind and sagacious advice to Burns); and "the lofty brow of ancient Kier," the splendid seat of the chief family of the name of Stirling; from which, to say nothing of remoter objects, the prospect has, on one hand, the rock of Snowden, and in front the field of Bannockburn.

From this pleasant tour, so rich in its results, Scott returned in time to attend the October assizes at Jedburgh, on which occasion he made his first appearance as counsel in a criminal court, and had the satisfaction of helping a veteran poacher and sheep-stealer to escape through some of the meshes of the law. "You're a lucky scoundrel," Scott whispered to his client, when the verdict was pronounced. "I'm just o' your mind," quoth the desperado, "and I'll send ye a maukin (hare) the morn, man." I am not sure whether it was at these assizes or the next in the same town that he had less success in the case of a certain notorious housebreaker. The man, however, was well aware that no skill could have baffled the clear evidence against him, and was, after his fashion, grateful for such exertions as had been made in his behalf. He requested the young advocate to visit him once more before he left the place. Scott's curiosity induced him to accept this invitation, and his friend, as soon as they were alone together in the condemned cell, said, "I am very sorry, sir, that I have no fee to offer you, so let me beg your acceptance of two bits of advice which may be useful, perhaps, when you come to have a house of your own. I am done with practice, you see, and here is my legacy. Never keep a large watchdog out of doors—we can always silence them cheaply—indeed, if it be a *dog*, 'tis easier than whistling—but tie a little tight yelping terrier within; and secondly, put no trust in nice, clever, gimcrack locks—the only thing that bothers us is a huge old heavy one, no matter how simple the construction,—and the ruder and rustier the key, so much the better for the house-keeper." I remember hearing him tell the story some thirty years after at a Judges' dinner at Jedburgh, and he summed it up with a rhyme—

\* Waverley, vol. ii. p. 82.

† Introduction to the *Lady of the Lake*. 1830.

"Ay, ay, my lord," (I think he addressed his friend Lord Meadowbank)—

"Yelping terrier, rusty key,  
Was Walter Scott's best Jeddart fee."

At these, or perhaps the next assizes, he was also counsel in an appeal case touching a cow which his client had sold as sound, but which the Court below (the Sheriff) had pronounced to have what is called *the cliers*—a disease analogous to glanders in a horse. In opening his case before Sir David Rae, Lord Eskgrove, Scott stoutly maintained the healthiness of the cow, who, as he said, had merely a cough. "Stop there," quoth the Judge, "I have had plenty of healthy kye in my time, but I never heard of aye of them coughing. A coughin' cow!—that will never do—sustain the Sheriff's judgment, and decern."

A day or two after this Scott and his old companion were again on their way into Liddesdale, and "just," says the Shortreed Memorandum, "as we were passing by Singdon, we saw a grand herd o' cattle a' feeding by the roadside, and a fine young bullock, the best in the whole lot, was in the midst of them, coughing lustily. 'Ah,' said Scott, 'what a pity for my client that old Eskgrove had not taken Singdon on his way to the town. That bonny creature would have saved us—"

"A Daniel come to judgment, yea, a Daniel;  
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!"

The winter of 1793-4 appears to have been passed like the preceding one; the German class resumed their sittings; Scott spoke in his debating club on the questions of Parliamentary Reform and the Inviolability of the Person of the First Magistrate, which the circumstances of the time had invested with extraordinary interest, and in both of which he no doubt took the side adverse to the principles of the English and the practice of the French Liberals. His love affair continued on exactly the same footing as before—and for the rest, like the young heroes in Redgauntlet, he "swept the boards of the Parliament House with the skirts of his gown; laughed, and made others laugh; drank claret at Bayle's, Fortune's, and Walker's, and eat oysters in the Covenant Close." On his desk "the new novel most in repute lay snugly entrenched beneath Stair's Institute, or an open volume of Decisions; and his dressing-table was littered "with old play-bills, letters respecting a meeting of the Faculty, Rules of the Speculative, Syllabus of Lectures—all the miscellaneous contents of a young advocate's pocket, which contains everything but briefs and bank-notes." His own professional occupation, though gradually increasing, was still of the most humble sort; but he took a lively interest in the proceedings of the Criminal Court, and more especially in those arising out of the troubled state of the public feeling as to politics.

In the spring of 1794 I find him writing to his friends in Roxburghshire with great exultation about the "good spirit" manifesting itself among the upper classes of the citizens of Edinburgh, and above all, the organization of a regiment of volunteers, in which his brother Thomas, now a fine active young man, equally handsome and high-spirited, was enrolled as a grenadier; while, as he remarks, his own "unfortunate in-

firmitv" condemned him to be "a mere spectator of the drills." In the course of the same year the plan of a corps of volunteer light horse was started; and, if the recollection of Mr. Skene be accurate, the suggestion originally proceeded from Scott himself, who certainly had a principal share in its subsequent success. He writes to his uncle at Rosebank, requesting him to be on the look-out for a "strong gelding, such as would suit a stalwart dragoon;" and intimating his intention to part with his collection of Scottish coins, rather than not be mounted to his mind. The corps, however, was not organized for some time.

Scott spent the long vacation of this year chiefly in Roxburghshire, but again visited Keir, Cambusmore, and others of his friends in Perthshire, and came to Edinburgh, early in September, to be present at the trials of Watt and Downie, on a charge of high treason. Watt seems to have tendered his services to Government as a spy upon the Society of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, but ultimately, considering himself as underpaid, to have embraced, to their wildest extent, the schemes he had become acquainted with in the course of this worthy occupation; and he and one Downie, a mechanic, were now arraigned as having taken a prominent part in the organizing of a plot for a general rising in Edinburgh, to seize the castle, the bank, the persons of the Judges, and proclaim a provisional Republican Government; all which was supposed to have been arranged in concert with the Hardies, Thelwalls, Holcrofts, and so forth, who were a few weeks later brought to trial in London, for an alleged conspiracy to "summon delegates to a National Convention, with a view to subvert the Government, and levy war upon the King." The English prisoners were acquitted, but Watt and Downie were not so fortunate.

In March, 1795, when the Court rose, he proceeded into Galloway, where he had not before been, in order to make himself acquainted with persons and localities mixed up with the case of a certain Rev. Mr. M'Naught, minister of Girthon, whose trial, on charges of habitual drunkenness, singing of lewd and profane songs, and moreover of promoting irregular marriages as a justice of the peace, was about to take place before the General Assembly of the Kirk. Mr. M'Naught was deposed from the ministry, and his young advocate has written out at the end of the printed papers on the case two of the *songs* which had been alleged in the evidence. They are both grossly indecent. It is to be observed, that the research he had made with a view to pleading this man's cause, carried him for the first, and I believe for the last time, into the scenery of his Guy Mannering; and I may add, that several of the names of the minor characters of the novel (that of *M'Guffog*, for example) appear in the list of witnesses for and against his client.

To return for a moment to Scott's love affair. I find him writing as follows, in March, 1795, to his cousin, William Scott, now Laird of Raeburn, who was then in the East Indies:—"The lady you allude to has been in town all this winter, and going a good deal into public, which has not in the least altered the meekness of her manners. Matters, you see, stand just as they did."

To another friend he writes thus, from Rosebank, on the 23rd of August, 1795:—

"It gave me the highest satisfaction to find, by the receipt of your letter of the 14th current, that you have formed precisely the same opinion with me, both with regard to the interpretation of ———'s letter as highly flattering and favourable, and to the mode of conduct I ought to pursue—for, after all, what she has pointed out is the most prudent line of conduct for us both, at least till better days, which, I think myself now entitled to suppose, she, as well as I myself, will look forward to with pleasure. If you were surprised at reading the important billet, you may guess how agreeably I was so at receiving it; for I had, to anticipate disappointment,—struggled to suppress every rising gleam of hope,—and it would be very difficult to describe the mixed feelings her letter occasioned, which, *entre nous*, terminated in a very hearty fit of crying. I read over her epistle about ten times a day, and always with new admiration of her generosity and candour; and as often take shame to myself for the mean suspicions which, after knowing her so long, I could listen to, while endeavouring to guess how she would conduct herself. To tell you the truth, I cannot but confess, that my *amour propre*, which one would expect should have been exalted, has suffered not a little upon this occasion, through a sense of my own *unworthiness*, pretty similar to that which afflicted Linton upon sitting down at Kier's table. I ought perhaps to tell you, what, indeed, you will perceive from her letter, that I was always attentive, while consulting with you upon the subject of my declaration, rather to under than over-rate the extent of our intimacy. By the way, I must not omit mentioning the respect in which I hold your knowledge of the fair sex, and your capacity of advising in these matters, since it certainly is to your encouragement that I owe the present situation of my affairs. I wish to God that, since you have acted as so useful an auxiliary during my attack, which has succeeded in bringing the enemy to terms, you would next sit down before some fortress yourself, and, were it as impregnable as the rock of Gibraltar, I should, notwithstanding, have the highest expectations of your final success. \* \* \* \* \*

"We have a great marriage towards here—Scott of Harden, and a daughter of Count Bruhl, the famous chess-player, a lady of sixteen quarters, half-sister to the Wyndhams. I wish they may come down soon, as we shall have fine racketting, of which I will, probably, get my share. I think of being in town some time next month, but whether for good and all, or only for a visit, I am not certain. Oh for November! Our meeting will be a little embarrassing one. How will she look, &c., &c., &c., are the important subjects of my present conjectures—how different from what they were three weeks ago! I give you leave to laugh, when I tell you seriously, I had begun to 'dwindle, peak, and pine' upon the subject; but now, after the charge I have received, it were a shame to resemble Pharaoh's lean kine. If good living and plenty of exercise can avert that calamity, I am in little danger of disobedience, and so, to conclude classically,

"*Dicite Io pœan, et Io bis dicite pœan!*—

"*Jubeo te bene valere,*

"GUALTERUS SCOTT."

## ANECDOTES OF SCOTT'S YOUTH.

It must, I think, have been while he was indulging his *vagabond vein*, during the autumn of 1794, that Miss Aikin (afterwards Mrs. Barbauld) paid her visit to Edinburgh, and entertained a party at Mr. Dugald Stewart's by reading Mr. William Taylor's then unpublished version of Burger's Lenore. In the Essay on Imitation of Popular Poetry the reader has a full account of the interest with which Scott heard, some weeks afterwards, a friend's imperfect recollections of this performance; the anxiety with which he sought after a copy of the original German; the delight with which he at length perused it; and how, having just been reading the specimens of ballad poetry introduced into Lewis's romance of *The Monk*, he called to mind the early facility of versification which had lain so long in abeyance, and ventured to promise his friend a rhymed translation of Lenore from his own pen. The friend in question was Miss Cranstoun, afterwards Countess of Purgstall, the sister of his friend George Cranstoun, now Lord Corehouse. He began the task, he tells us, after supper, and did not retire to bed until he had finished it, having by that time worked himself into a state of excitement which set sleep at defiance.

Next morning, before breakfast, he carried his MS. to Miss Cranstoun, who was not only delighted but astonished at it; for I have seen a letter of hers to a mutual friend in the country, in which she says: "Upon my word, Walter Scott is going to turn out a poet—something of a cross, I think, between Burns and Gray." The same day he read it also to his friend Sir Alexander Wood, who retains a vivid recollection of the high strain of enthusiasm into which he had been exalted by dwelling on the wild unearthly imagery of the German bard. "He read it over to me," says Sir Alexander, "in a very slow and solemn tone, and after we had said a few words about its merits, continued to look at the fire silent and musing for some minutes, until he at length burst out with 'I wish to Heaven I could get a skull and two cross-bones.'" Wood said that if he would accompany him to the house of John Bell, the celebrated surgeon, he had no doubt this wish might be easily gratified. They went thither accordingly on the instant. Mr. Bell (who was a great humourist) smiled on hearing the object of their visit, and pointing to a closet at the corner of his library, bade Walter enter and choose. From a well-furnished museum of mortality he selected forthwith what seemed to him the handsomest skull and pair of cross-bones it contained, and wrapping them in his handkerchief, carried the formidable bundle home to George's Square. The trophies were immediately mounted on the top of his little bookcase; and when Wood visited him, after many years of absence from this country, he found them in possession of a similar position in his dressing-room at Abbotsford.

All this occurred in the beginning of April, 1796. A few days afterwards, Scott went to pay a visit at a country house, where he expected to meet the "lady of his love." Jane Anne Cranstoun was in the secret of his attachment, and knew that however doubtful might be Miss Stuart's feeling on that subject, she had a high admiration of Scott's abilities, and often corresponded with him on literary matters; so, after he had left Edinburgh, it occurred to her that she might perhaps forward his views in this quarter, by presenting him in the character of a printed author.

William Erskine being called into her counsels, a few copies of the ballad were forthwith thrown off in the most elegant style, and one richly bound and blazoned followed Scott in the course of a few days to the country. The verses were read and approved of, and Miss Cranstoun at least flattered herself that he had not made his first appearance in types to no purpose.\*

The affair in which this romantic creature took so lively an interest was now approaching its end. It was known, before this autumn closed, that the lady of his vows had finally promised her hand to his amiable rival; and, when the fact was announced, some of those who knew Scott the best appear to have entertained very serious apprehensions as to the effect which the disappointment might have upon his feelings. For example, one of those brothers of *the Mountain* wrote as follows to another of them, on the 12th October, 1796 :—"Mr. Forbes marries Miss Stuart. This is not good news. I always dreaded there was some self-deception on the part of our romantic friend, and I now shudder at the violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind. Who is it that says, 'Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for LOVE'? I hope sincerely it may be verified on this occasion."

Scott had, however, in all likelihood, digested his agony during a solitary ride in the Highlands.

\* This story was told by the Countess of Purgstall on her death-bed to Captain Basil Hall. See his *Schloss Hainfeld*, p. 333.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PUBLICATION OF BALLADS AFTER BURGER—MARRIAGE— TRANSLATIONS AND POEMS.

REBELLING, as usual, against circumstances, Scott seems to have turned with renewed ardour to his literary pursuits; and in that same October, 1796, he was "prevailed on," as he playfully expresses it, "by the *request of friends*, to indulge his own vanity, by publishing the translation of Lenore, with that of the Wild Huntsman, also from Bürger, in a thin quarto." The little volume, which has no author's name on the title page, was printed for Manners and Miller, of Edinburgh. The first-named of these respectable publishers had been a fellow-student in the German class of Dr. Willich; and this circumstance probably suggested the negotiation. It was conducted by William Erskine, as appears from his postscript to a letter addressed to Scott by his sister, who, before it reached its destination, had become the wife of Mr. Campbell (Colquhoun of Clathick (and Kellermont)—in after days Lord Advocate of Scotland. This was another of Scott's dearest female friends—the humble home which she shared with her brother during his early struggles at the bar had been the scene of many of his happiest hours.

Scott owed his copy of Burger's works to the young Lady of Harden, whose marriage occurred in the autumn of 1795. She was daughter of Count Bruhl, of Martkirchen, long Saxon Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, by his second wife the Countess-Dowager of Egremont; and though I believe she had never at this time been out of England, spoke her father's language perfectly, corresponding regularly with many of her relations on the Continent, and was very fond of the rising literature of the Germans. The young kinsman was introduced to her soon after her arrival at Mertoun, and his attachment to German studies excited her attention and interest. Mrs. Scott supplied him with many standard German books, besides Burger; and the gift of an Adelung's dictionary from his old ally, George Constable (Jonathan Oldbuck), enabled him to master their contents sufficiently for the purposes of translation. The ballad of the Wild Huntsman appears to have been executed, under Mrs. Scott's eye, during the month that preceded his first publication; and he was thenceforth engaged in a succession of versions from the dramas of Meier and Iffland, several of which are still extant in his MS., marked 1796 and 1797. These are all in prose like their originals; but he also versified at the same time some lyrical fragments of Goethe, as, for example, the Morlachian Ballad—

"What yonder glimmers so white on the mountain?"

and the song from Claudina von Villa Bella. He consulted his friend at Mertoun on all these essays; and I have often heard him say, that, among those many "obligations of a distant date which remained impressed on his memory, after a life spent in a constant interchange of friendship and kindness," he counted not as the least the lady's frankness in correcting his Scotticisms, and more especially his Scottish rhymes.

His obligations to this lady were indeed various; but I doubt, after all, whether these were the most important. He used to say, that she was the first *woman of real fashion that took him up*; that she used the privileges of her sex and station in the truest spirit of kindness; set him right as to a thousand little trifles, which no one else would have ventured to notice; and, in short, did for him what no one but an elegant woman can do for a young man, whose early days have been spent in narrow and provincial circles. "When I first saw Sir Walter," she writes to me, "he was about four or five and twenty, but looked much younger. He seemed bashful and awkward; but there were from the first such gleams of superior sense and spirit in his conversation, that I was hardly surprised when, after our acquaintance had ripened a little, I felt myself to be talking with a man of genius. He was most modest about himself, and showed his little pieces apparently without any consciousness that they could possess any claim on particular attention. Nothing so easy and good-humoured as the way in which he received any hints I might offer, when he seemed to be tampering with the King's English. I remember particularly how he laughed at himself when I made him take notice that 'the little two dogs,' in some of his lines, did not please an English ear accustomed to 'the two little dogs.'"

Nor was this the only person at Mertoun who took a lively interest in his pursuits. Harden entered into all the feelings of his beautiful bride on this subject; and his mother, the Lady Diana Scott, daughter of the last Earl of Marchmont, did so no less. She had conversed, in her early days, with the brightest ornaments of the cycle of Queen Anne, and preserved rich stores of anecdote, well calculated to gratify the curiosity and excite the ambition of a young enthusiast in literature. Lady Diana soon appreciated the minstrel of the clan; and, surviving to a remarkable age, she had the satisfaction of seeing him at the height of his eminence—the solitary person who could give the author of *Marmion* personal reminiscences of Pope.

The reception of the two ballads had been favourable, in his own circle at least. The many inaccuracies and awkwardnesses of rhyme and diction to which he alludes in republishing them towards the close of his life, did not prevent real lovers of poetry from seeing that no one but a poet could have transfused the daring imagery of the German in a style so free, bold, masculine, and full of life; but, wearied as all such readers had been with that succession of feeble, flimsy, lackadaisical trash which followed the appearance of the *Reliques* by Bishop Percy, the opening of such a new vein of popular poetry as these verses revealed would have been enough to produce lenient critics for far inferior translations. Many sent forth copies of the *Lenore* about the same time; and some of these might be thought better than Scott's in particular passages; but, on the

whole, it seems to have been felt and acknowledged by those best entitled to judge, that he deserved the palm. Meantime, we must not forget that Scotland had lost that very year the great poet Burns—her glory and her shame.

In his pursuit of his German studies Scott acquired, about this time, a very important assistant in Mr. Skene, of Rubislaw, in Aberdeenshire; a gentleman considerably his junior, who had just returned to Scotland from a residence of several years in Saxony, where he had obtained a thorough knowledge of the language, and accumulated a better collection of German books than any to which Scott had, as yet, found access. Shortly after Mr. Skene's arrival in Edinburgh, Scott requested to be introduced to him by a mutual friend, Mr. Edmonstone, of Newton, and their fondness for the same literature, with Scott's eagerness to profit by his new acquaintance's superior attainment in it, thus opened an intercourse which general similarity of tastes, and I venture to add, in many of the most important features of character, soon ripened into the familiarity of a tender friendship.

Among the common tastes which served to knit these friends together, was their love of horsemanship, in which, as in all other manly exercises, Skene highly excelled; and the fears of a French invasion becoming every day more serious, their thoughts were turned with corresponding zeal to the project of organizing a force of mounted volunteers in Scotland. "The London Light Horse had set the example"—(says Mr. Skene)—"but in truth it was to Scott's ardour that this force in the North owed its origin. Unable, by reason of his lameness, to serve amongst his friends on foot, he had nothing for it but to rouse the spirit of the moss-trooper, with which he readily inspired all who possessed the means of substituting the sabre for the musket."

On the 14th February, 1797, these friends and many more met and drew up an offer to serve as a body of volunteer cavalry in Scotland; which offer, being transmitted through the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord-Lieutenant of Mid-Lothian, was accepted by Government. The organization of the corps proceeded rapidly; they extended their offer to serve in any part of the island in case of actual invasion; and this also being accepted, the whole arrangement was shortly completed; when Charles Maitland, Esq. of Rankeillor, was elected Major-Commandant; (Sir) William Rae of St. Catharine's, Captain; James Gordon of Craig, and George Robinson of Clermiston, Lieutenants; (Sir) William Forbes of Pitsligo, and James Skene of Rubislaw, Cornets; Walter Scott, Paymaster, Quartermaster, and Secretary; John Adams, Adjutant. But the treble duties thus devolved on Scott were found to interfere too severely with his other avocations, and Colin Mackenzie of Portmore relieved him soon afterwards from those of paymaster.

"The part of quartermaster," says Mr. Skene, "was properly selected for him, that he might be spared the rough usage of the ranks; but, notwithstanding his infirmity, he had a remarkably firm seat on horseback, and in all situations a fearless one: no fatigue ever seemed too much for him, and his zeal and animation served to sustain the enthusiasm of the whole corps, while his ready *mot à rire*, kept up, in all, a degree of good-humour and relish for the service, without which, the toil and privations of long

daily drills would not easily have been submitted to by such a body of gentlemen. At every interval of exercise, the order, *sit at ease*, was the signal for the quartermaster to lead the squadron to merriment; every eye was intuitively turned on 'Earl Walter,' as he was familiarly called by his associates of that date, and his ready joke seldom failed to raise the ready laugh. He took his full share in all the labours and duties of the corps, had the highest pride in its progress and proficiency, and was such a trooper himself, as only a very powerful frame of body and the warmest zeal in the cause could have enabled any one to be. But his habitual good-humour was the great charm, and at the daily mess (for we all dined together when in quarters) that reigned supreme."

"Earl Walter's" first charger, by the way, was a tall and powerful animal named *Lenore*. These daily drills appear to have been persisted in during the spring and summer of 1797; the corps spending moreover some weeks in quarters at Musselburgh. The majority of the troop having professional duties to attend to, the ordinary hour for drill was five in the morning; and when we reflect, that after some hours of hard work in this way, Scott had to produce himself regularly in the Parliament House with gown and wig, for the space of four or five hours at least, while his chamber practice, though still humble, was on the increase—and that he had found a plentiful source of new social engagements in his troop connexions—it certainly could have excited no surprise had his literary studies been found suffering total intermission during this busy period. That such was not the case, however, his correspondence and note-books afford ample evidence.

He had no turn, at this time of his life, for early rising; so that the regular attendance at the morning drills was of itself a strong evidence of his military zeal; but he must have, in spite of them, and of all other circumstances, persisted in what was the usual custom of all his earlier life, namely, the devotion of the best hours of the night to solitary study. In general, both as a young man, and in more advanced age, his constitution required a good allowance of sleep, and he, on principle, indulged in it, saying "he was but half a man if he had not full seven hours of utter unconsciousness;" but his whole mind and temperament were, at this period, in a state of most fervent exaltation, and spirit triumphed over matter. His translation of Steinberg's *Otho of Wittelsbach*, is marked "1796-7;" from which, I conclude, it was finished in the latter year. The volume containing that of Meier's *Wolfred of Dromberg*, a drama of Chivalry, is dated 1797; and, I think, the reader will presently see cause to suspect, that though not attended to in his imperfect note-book, these tasks must have been accomplished in the very season of the daily drills.

His business at the bar was increasing at the same time. His *fee-book* is now before me, and it shows that he made by his first year's practice £24 3s.; by the second, £57 15s.; by the third, £84 4s.; by the fourth, £90; and in his fifth year at the bar—that is, from November, 1796, to July, 1797—£144 10s.; of which £50 were fees from his father's chamber.

His friend, Charles Kerr, of Abbotrule, had been residing a good deal, about this time, in Cumberland; indeed, he was so enraptured with the

scenery of the lakes as to take a house in Keswick, with the intention of spending half of all future years there. His letters to Scott (March, April, 1797) abound in expressions of wonder that he should continue to devote so much of his vacations to the Highlands of Scotland, "with every crag and precipice of which," says he, "I should imagine you would be familiar by this time; nay, that the goats themselves might almost claim you for an acquaintance;" while another district lay so near him at least as well qualified "to give a swell to the fancy."

After the rising of the Court of Session in July, Scott accordingly set out on a tour to the English lakes, accompanied by his brother John, and Adam Fergusson. Their first stage was Halyards in Tweeddale, then inhabited by his friend's father, the philosopher and historian; and they stayed there for a day or two, in the course of which Scott had his first and only interview with David Ritchie, the original of his Black Dwarf. Proceeding southwards, the tourists visited Carlisle, Penrith,—the vale of the Eamont, including Mayburgh and Brougham Castle,—Ulswater and Windermere; and at length fixed their headquarters at the then peaceful and sequestered little watering-place of Gilsland, making excursions from thence to the various scenes of romantic interest which are commemorated in *The Bridal of Triermain*, and otherwise leading very much the sort of life depicted among the loungers of St. Ronan's Well. Scott was, on his first arrival in Gilsland, not a little engaged with the beauty of one of the young ladies lodged under the same roof with him; and it was on occasion of a visit in her company to some part of the Roman Wall that he indited his lines—

"Take these flowers, which, purple waving,  
On the ruined rampart grew," &c.

But this was only a passing glimpse of flirtation. A week or so afterwards commenced a more serious affair.

Riding one day with Fergusson, they met, some miles from Gilsland, a young lady taking the air on horseback, whom neither of them had previously remarked, and whose appearance instantly struck both so much, that they kept her in view until they had satisfied themselves that she also was one of the party at Gilsland. The same evening there was a ball, at which Captain Scott produced himself in his regimentals, and Fergusson also thought proper to be equipped in the uniform of the Edinburgh Volunteers. There was no little rivalry among the young travellers as to who should first get presented to the unknown beauty of the morning's ride; but though both the gentlemen in scarlet had the advantage of being dancing partners, their friend succeeded in handing the fair stranger to supper—and such was his first introduction to Charlotte Margaret Carpenter.

Without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions; "a form that was fashioned as light as a fay's;" a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep-set, and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing—her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty young Englishwoman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain natural archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompani-

ment of a French accent. A lovelier vision, as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined; and from that hour the fate of the young poet was fixed.

She was the daughter of Jean Charpentier, of Lyons, a devoted royalist, who held an office under Government,\* and Charlotte Volere, his wife. She and her only brother, Charles Charpentier, had been educated in the Protestant religion of their mother; and when their father died, which occurred in the beginning of the Revolution, Madame Charpentier made her escape with her children, first to Paris, and then to England, where they found a warm friend and protector in the late Marquis of Downshire, who had, in the course of his travels in France, formed an intimate acquaintance with the family, and, indeed, spent some time under their roof. M. Charpentier had, in his first alarm as to the coming Revolution, invested £4,000 in English securities—part in a mortgage upon Lord Downshire's estates. On the mother's death, which occurred soon after her arrival in London, this nobleman took on himself the character of sole guardian to her children; and Charles Charpentier received in due time, through his interest, an appointment in the service of the East India Company, in which he had by this time risen to the lucrative situation of Commercial Resident at Salem. His sister was now making a little excursion, under the care of the lady who had superintended her education, Miss Jane Nicolson, a daughter of Dr. Nicolson, Dean of Exeter, and granddaughter of William Nicolson, Bishop of Carlisle, well known as the editor of "The English Historical Library." To some connexions which the learned prelate's family had ever since his time kept up in the diocese of Carlisle, Miss Carpenter owed the direction of her summer tour.

Scott's father was now in a very feeble state of health, which accounts for his first announcement of this affair being made in a letter to his mother: it is undated; but by this time the young lady had left Gilsland for Carlisle, where she remained until her destiny was settled.

*To Mrs. Scott, George's Square, Edinburgh.*

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—

"I should very ill deserve the care and affection with which you have ever regarded me, were I to neglect my duty so far as to omit consulting my father and you in the most important step which I can possibly take in life, and upon the success of which my future happiness must depend. It is with pleasure, I think, that I can avail myself of your advice and instructions in an affair of so great importance as that which I have at present on my hands. You will probably guess from this preamble, that I am engaged in a matrimonial plan, which is really the case. Though my acquaintance with the young lady has not been of long standing, this circumstance is in some degree counterbalanced by the intimacy in which we have lived, and by the opportunities which that intimacy has afforded me of remarking her conduct and sentiments on many different occasions,

\* In several deeds which I have seen, M. Charpentier is designed "Ecuyer du ol." What the post he held was I never heard.

some of which were rather of a delicate nature, so that in fact I have seen more of her during the few weeks we have been together, than I could have done after a much longer acquaintance, shackled by the common forms of ordinary life. You will not expect from me a description of her person,—for which I refer you to my brother, as also for a fuller account of all the circumstances attending the business than can be comprised in the compass of a letter. Without flying into raptures, for I must assure you that my judgment as well as my affections are consulted upon this occasion ; without flying into raptures, then, I may safely assure you, that her temper is sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious. I have been very explicit with her upon the nature of my expectations, and she thinks she can accommodate herself to the situation which I should wish her to hold in society as my wife, which, you will easily comprehend, I mean should neither be extravagant nor degrading. Her fortune, though partly dependent upon her brother, who is high in office at Madras, is very considerable—at present £500 a year. This, however, we must, in some degree, regard as precarious,—I mean to the full extent ; and indeed when you know her you will not be surprised that I regard this circumstance chiefly because it removes those prudential considerations which would otherwise render our union impossible for the present. Betwixt her income and my own professional exertions, I have little doubt we will be enabled to hold the rank in society which my family and situation entitle me to fill.

“My dear mother, I cannot express to you the anxiety I have that you will not think me flighty nor inconsiderate in this business. Believe me that experience, in one instance—you cannot fail to know to what I allude—is too recent to permit my being so hasty in my conclusions as the warmth of my temper might have otherwise prompted. I am also most anxious that you should be prepared to show her kindness, which I know the goodness of your own heart will prompt, more especially when I tell you that she is an orphan, without relations, and almost without friends. Her guardian is, I should say *was*, for she is of age, Lord Downshire, to whom I must write for his consent, a piece of respect to which he is entitled for his care of her,—and there the matter rests at present. I think I need not tell you that if I assume the new character which I threaten, I shall be happy to find that in that capacity I may make myself more useful to my brothers, and especially to Anne, than I could in any other. On the other hand, I shall certainly expect that my friends will endeavour to show every attention in their power to a woman who forsakes for me prospects much more splendid than what I can offer, and who comes into Scotland without a single friend but myself. I find I could write a great deal more upon this subject, but as it is late, and as I must write to my father, I shall restrain myself. I think (but you are best judge) that in the circumstances in which I stand you should write to her, Miss Carpenter, under cover to me at Carlisle.

“Write to me very fully upon this important subject—send me your opinion, your advice, and above all, your blessing ; you will see the necessity of not delaying a minute in doing so, and in keeping this business *strictly private* till you hear further from me, since you are not ignorant

that even at this advanced period an objection on the part of Lord Downshire, or many other accidents, may intervene, in which case I should little wish my disappointment to be public.

"Believe me, my dear mother,

"Ever your dutiful and affectionate son,

"WALTER SCOTT."

Scott remained in Cumberland until the Jedburch Assizes recalled him to his legal duties. On arriving in that town he immediately sent for his friend Shortreed, whose *memorandum* records that the evening of the 30th September, 1797, was one of the most joyous he ever spent. "Scott" (he says) "was *sair* beside himself about Miss Carpenter—we toasted her twenty times over—and sat together, he raving about her until it was one in the morning." He soon returned to Cumberland; and the following letters will throw light on the character and conduct of the parties, and on the nature of the difficulties which were presented by the prudence and prejudices of the young advocate's family connexions. It appears that, at one stage of the business, Scott had seriously contemplated leaving the bar at Edinburgh, and establishing himself with his bride (I know not in what capacity) in one of the colonies.

*To Miss Christian Rutherford, Ashestiel, by Selkirk.*

"Has it never happened to you, my dear Miss Christy, in the course of your domestic economy, to meet with a drawer stuffed so very, so *extremely* full, that it was very difficult to pull it open, however desirous you might be to exhibit its contents? In case this miraculous event has ever taken place, you may somewhat conceive from thence the cause of my silence, which has really proceeded from my having a very great deal to communicate, so much so that I really hardly know how to begin. As for my affection and friendship for you, believe me sincerely, they neither slumber nor sleep, and it is only your suspicions of their drowsiness which incline me to write at this period of a business highly interesting to me, rather than when I could have done so with something like certainty. Hem! Hem! It must come out at once—I am in a very fair way of being married to a very amiable young woman, with whom I formed an attachment in the course of my tour. She was born in France—her parents were of English extraction—the name Carpenter. She was left an orphan early in life and educated in England, and is at present under the care of a Miss Nicolson, a daughter of the late Dean of Exeter, who was on a visit to her relations in Cumberland. Miss Carpenter is of age, but as she lies under great obligations to the Marquis of Downshire, who was her guardian, she cannot take a step of such importance without his consent—and I daily expect his final answer upon the subject. Her fortune is dependent in a great measure upon an only and very affectionate brother. He is Commercial Resident at Salem in India, and has settled upon her an annuity of £500. Of her personal accomplishments I shall only say that she possesses very good sense, with uncommon good temper, which I have seen put to most severe trials. I must bespeak your kindness and friendship for her. You may easily believe I shall rest very much both

tipōh Miss R. and you for giving her the *carte de pays* when she comes to Edinburgh. I may give you a hint that there is no *romance* in her composition—and that though born in France, she has the sentiments and manners of an Englishwoman, and does not like to be thought otherwise. A very slight tinge in her pronunciation is all which marks the foreigner. She is at present at Carlisle, where I shall join her as soon as our arrangements are finally made. Some difficulties have occurred in settling matters with my father, owing to certain prepossessions which you can easily conceive his adopting. One main article was the uncertainty of her provision, which has been in part removed by the safe arrival of her remittances for this year, with assurances of their being regular and even larger in future, her brother's situation being extremely lucrative. Another objection was her birth. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' but as it was *birth merely and solely*, this has been abandoned. You will be more interested about other points regarding her, and I can only say that—though our acquaintance was shorter than ever I could have thought of forming such a connexion upon—it was exceedingly close, and gave me full opportunities for observation—and if I had parted with her, it must have been for ever, which both parties began to think would be a disagreeable thing. She has conducted herself through the whole business with so much propriety as to make a strong impression in her favour upon the minds of my father and mother, prejudiced as they were against her, from the circumstances I have mentioned. We shall be your neighbours in the New Town, and intend to live very quietly; Charlotte will need many lessons from Miss R. in housewifery. Pray show this letter to Miss R. with my very best compliments. Nothing can now stand in the way except Lord Downshire, who may not think the match a prudent one for Miss C.—but he will surely think her entitled to judge for herself at her age, in what she would wish to place her happiness. She is not a beauty, by any means, but her person and face are very engaging. She is a brunette—her manners are lively, but when necessary she can be very serious. She was baptized and educated a Protestant of the Church of England. I think I have now said enough upon this subject. Do not write till you hear from me again, which will be when all is settled. I wish this important event may hasten your return to town. I send a goblin story,\* with best compliments to the misses, and ever am, yours affectionately,

"WALTER SCOTT."

*From Lord Downshire to Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh.*

"London, October 15, 1797.

"SIR,—

"I received your letter with pleasure, instead of considering it as an intrusion. One thing more being fully stated would have made it perfectly satisfactory, namely, the sort of income you immediately possess, and the sort of maintenance Miss Carpenter, in case of your demise, might reasonably expect. Though she is of an age to judge for herself in the choice of an object that she would like to run the race of life with, she has referred the subject to me. As her friend and guardian, I in duty

\* The Erl King.

must try to secure her happiness, by endeavouring to keep her comfortable immediately, and to prevent her being left destitute in case of any unhappy contingency. Her good sense and good education are her chief fortune; therefore, in the worldly way of talking, she is not entitled to much. Her brother, who was also left under my care at an early period, is excessively fond of her; he has no person to think of but her as yet, and will certainly be enabled to make her very handsome presents, as he is doing very well in India, where I sent him some years ago, and where he bears a very high character, I am happy to say. I do not throw out this to induce you to make any proposal beyond what prudence and discretion recommend; but I hope I shall hear from you by return of post, as I may be shortly called out of town to some distance. As children are in general the consequence of an happy union, I should wish to know what may be your thoughts or wishes upon that subject. I trust you will not think me too particular; indeed I am sure you will not, when you consider that I am endeavouring to secure the happiness and welfare of an estimable young woman whom you admire and profess to be partial and attached to, and for whom I have the highest regard, esteem, and respect. I am, sir, your obedient humble servant,

"DOWNSHIRE."

*From Miss Carpenter to the Same.*

"Carlisle, Oct. 22.

"Your last letter, my dear sir, contains a very fine train of *perhaps*, and of so many pretty conjectures, that it is not flattering you to say you excel in the art of tormenting yourself. As it happens, you are quite wrong in all your suppositions. I have been waiting for Lord D.'s answer to your letter, to give a full answer to your very proper inquiries about my family. Miss Nicolson says, that when she did offer to give you some information, you refused it—and advises me *now* to wait for Lord D.'s letter. Don't believe I have been idle; I have been writing very long letters to him, and all about you. How can you think that I will give an answer about the house until I hear from London?—that is quite impossible; and I believe you are a little out of your senses to imagine I can be in Edinburgh before the twelfth of next month. Oh, my dear sir, no—you must not think of it this *great while*. I am much flattered by your mother's remembrance; present by respectful compliments to her. You don't mention your father in your last *anxious* letter; I hope he is better. I am expecting every day to hear from my brother. You may tell your uncle he is Commercial Resident at Salem. He will find the name of Charles C. in his India list. My compliments to Captain Scott. *Sans adieu*,

"C. C."

*To the Same.*

"Carlisle, Oct. 25.

"Indeed, Mr. Scott, I am by no means pleased with all this writing. I have told you how much I dislike it, and yet you still persist in asking me to write, and that by return of post. Oh, you really are quite out of your senses. I should not have indulged you in that whim of yours had you not given me that hint that my silence gives an air of mystery. I have no reason that can detain me in acquainting you that my father and

mother were French, of the name of Charpentier; he had a place under Government; their residence was at Lyons, where you would find on inquiries that they lived in good repute and in *very good style*. I had the misfortune of losing my father before I could know the value of such a parent. At his death we were left to the care of Lord D., who was his very great friend, and very soon after I had the affliction of losing my mother. Our taking the name of Carpenter was on my brother's going to India, to prevent any little difficulties that might have occurred. I hope now you are pleased. Lord D. could have given you every information, as he has been acquainted with all my family. You say you almost love *him*, but until your *almost* comes to a *quite* I cannot love *you*. Before I conclude this famous epistle, I will give you a little hint—that is, not to put so many *must* in your letters—it is beginning *rather too soon*; and another thing is, that I take the liberty not to mind them much, but I expect you mind me. You *must* take care of yourself; you *must* think of me, and believe me yours sincerely, “C. C.”

*To the Same.*

“Carlisle, Oct. 26.

“I have only a minute before the post goes, to assure you, my dear sir, of the welcome reception of the stranger.\* The very great likeness to a friend of mine will endear him to me; he shall be my constant companion, but I wish he could give me an answer to a thousand questions I have to make—one in particular, what reason have you for so many fears you express? Have your friends changed? Pray let me know the truth—they perhaps don't like me *being French*. Do write immediately—let it be in better spirits. Et croyez-moi toujours votre sincere  
“C. C.”

*To the Same.*

“October 31st.

“.... All your apprehensions about your friends make me very uneasy. At your father's age prejudices are not easily overcome—old people have, you know, so much more wisdom and experience, that we must be guided by them. If he has an objection on my being *French*, I excuse him with all my heart, as I don't love them myself. Oh, how all these things plague me—when will it end? And to complete the matter, you talk of going to the West Indies. I am certain your father and uncle say you are a hot *heady* young man, quite mad, and I assure you I join with them; and I must believe that, when you have such an idea, you have then determined to think no more of me. I begin to repent of having accepted your picture. I will send it *back again*, if you ever think again about the West Indies. Your family then would *love me* very much—to forsake them for a *stranger*, a person who does not possess half the charms and good qualities that you *imagines*. I think I hear your uncle calling you a hot heady young man. I am certain of it, and I am *generally right* in my conjectures. What does your sister say about it? I suspect that she thinks on the matter as I should do, with fears and

\* A miniature of Scott.

anxieties for the happiness of her brother. If it be proper, and you think it would be *acceptable*, present my best compliments to your mother; and to my old acquaintance Captain Scott I beg to be remembered. This evening is the first ball—don't you wish to be of our party? I guess your answer—it would give me infinite pleasure. En attendant le plaisir de vous revoir, je suis toujours votre constante

“CHARLOTTE.”

*To the Same.*

“The Castle, Hartford, October 20, 1797.

“SIR,—

“I received the favour of your letter. It was so manly, honourable, candid, and so full of good sense, that I think Miss Carpenter's friends cannot in any way object to the union you propose. Its taking place, when or where, will depend upon herself, as I shall write to her by this night's post. Any provision that may be given to her by her brother, you will have settled upon her and her children; and I hope, with all my heart, that every earthly happiness may attend you both. I shall be always happy to hear it, and to subscribe myself your faithful friend and obedient humble servant,

“DOWNSHIRE.”

*(On the same sheet.)*

“Carlisle, Nov. 4.

“Last night I received the enclosed for you from Lord Downshire. If it has your approbation, I shall be very glad to see you as soon as will be convenient. I have a thousand things to tell you; but let me beg of you not to think for some time of a house. I am sure I can convince you of the propriety and prudence of waiting until your father will settle things more to your satisfaction, and until I have heard from my brother. You *must* be of my way of thinking.—Adieu.

“C. C.”

Scott obeyed this summons, and I suppose remained in Carlisle until the Court of Session met, which is always on the 12th of November.

*To W. Scott, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh.*

“Carlisle, Nov. 14th.

“Your letter never could have come in a more favourable moment. Anything you could have said would have been well received. You surprise me much at the regret you express you had of leaving Carlisle. Indeed, I can't believe it was on my account, I was so uncommonly stupid. I don't know what could be the matter with me, I was so very low, and felt really ill; it was even a trouble to speak. The settling of our little plans—all looked so much in earnest—that I began reflecting more seriously than I generally do, or *approve of*. I don't think that very thoughtful people ever can be happy. As this is my maxim, adieu to all thoughts. I have made a determination of being pleased with everything and with everybody in Edinburgh; a wise system for happiness, is it not? I enclose the lock. I have had almost all my hair cut off. Miss Nicolson has taken some, which she sends to London to be made into

something, but this you are not to know of, as she intends to present it to you. \* \* \* I am happy to hear of your father's being better pleased as to money matters; it will come at last; don't let that trifle disturb you. Adieu, Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur d'être votre très humble et très

"Obersante      "C. C."

"Carlisle, Nov. 27th.

"You have made me very *triste* all day. Pray never more complain of being poor. Are you not ten times richer than I am? Depend on yourself and your profession. I have no doubt you will rise very high, and be a *great rich man*, but we should look down to be contented with our lot, and banish all disagreeable thoughts. We shall do very well. I am very sorry to hear you have such a *bad head*. I hope I shall nurse away all your aches. I think you write too much. When I am *mistress* I shall not allow it. How very angry I should be with you if you were to part with *Lenore*. Do you really believe I should think it an *unnecessary expense* where your health and pleasure can be concerned? I have a better opinion of you, and I am very glad you don't give up the cavalry, as I love anything that is *stylish*. Don't forget to find a stand for the old carriage, as I shall like to keep it, in case we should have to go any journey; it is so much more convenient than the post chaises, and will do very well till we can keep *our carriage*. What an idea of yours was that to mention where you wish to have your *bones laid*! If you were married, I should think you were tired of me. A very pretty compliment *before marriage*. I hope sincerely that I shall not live to see that day. If you always have those cheerful thoughts, how very pleasant and gay you must be!

"Adieu, my dearest friend, take care of yourself if you love me, as I have *no wish* that you should *visit* that *beautiful* and *romantic* scene, the burying-place. Adieu, once more, and believe that you are loved very sincerely by

"C. C."

"Dec. 10th.

"If I could but really believe that my letter gave you only half the pleasure you express, I should almost think, my dearest Scott, that I should get very fond of writing merely for the pleasure to *indulge* you—that is saying a great deal. I hope you are sensible of the compliment I pay you, and don't expect I shall *always* be so pretty behaved. You may depend on me, my dearest friend, for fixing as *early* a day as I possibly can; and if it happens to be not quite so soon as you wish, you must not be angry with me. It is very unlucky you are such a bad house-keeper—as I am no better. I shall try. I hope to have very soon the pleasure of seeing you, and to tell you how much I love you; but I wish the first fortnight was over. With all my love, and those sort of pretty things—adieu.

"CHARLOTTE.

"P.S.—*Etudiez votre Français*. Remember you are to teach me Italian in return, but I shall be but a stupid scholar. *Aimez Charlotte.*"

"Carlisle, Dec. 14th.

\* \* \* \* "I heard last night from my friends in London, and

I shall certainly have the deed this week. I will send it to you directly; but not to lose so much time as you have been reckoning, I will prevent any little delay that might happen by the post, by fixing already next Wednesday for your coming here, and on Thursday the 21st—oh, my dear Scott—on that day I shall be yours for ever. “C. C.

“R.S.—Arrange it so that we shall see none of your family the night of our arrival. I shall be so tired, and such a fright, I should not be seen to advantage.”

To these extracts I add the following from the first leaf of an old black-letter Bible at Abbotsford :—

“*Secundum morem majorum hæc de familiâ Gualteri Scott, Jurisconsulti Edinensis, in librum hunc sacrum manu sua conscripta sunt.*

“*Gualterus Scott, filius Gualteri Scott et Annæ Ruthersford, natus erat apud Edinam 15mo die Augusti, A.D. 1771.*

“*Socius Facultatis Juridicæ Edinensis receptus erat 11mo die Julii, A.D. 1792.*

“*In ecclesiam Sanctæ Mariæ apud Carlisle, uxorem duxit Margaretam Charlottam Carpenter, filiam quondam Joannis Charpentier et Charlottæ Volere, Lugdunensem 24to die Decembris, 1797.*”

Scott carried his bride to a lodging in George Street, Edinburgh, a house which he had taken in South Castle Street not being quite prepared for her reception. The first fortnight, to which she had looked with such anxiety, was, I believe, more than sufficient to convince her husband's family that, however rashly he had formed the connexion, she had the sterling qualities of a good wife. Notwithstanding the little leaning to the pomps and vanities of the world, which her letters have not concealed, she had made up her mind to find her happiness in better things; and so long as their circumstances continued narrow, no woman could have conformed herself to them with more of good feeling and good sense. Some habits, new in the quiet domestic circles of Edinburgh citizens, did not escape criticism; and in particular, I have heard herself, in her most prosperous days, laugh heartily at the remonstrances of her George Street landlady, when it was discovered that the *southron* lodger chose to sit usually, and not on high occasions merely, in her drawing-room, on which subject the mother-in-law was disposed to take the thrifty old-fashioned dame's side.

I cannot fancy that Lady Scott's manners or ideas could ever have amalgamated very well with those of her husband's parents; but the feeble state of the old gentleman's health prevented her from seeing them constantly; and without any affectation of strict intimacy, they soon were, and always continued to be, very good friends. Anne Scott, the delicate sister to whom the Ashestiel Memoir alludes so tenderly, speedily formed a warm and sincere attachment for the stranger; but death, in a short time, carried off that interesting creature, who seems to have had much of her brother's imaginative and romantic temperament, without his power of controlling it.

Mrs. Scott's arrival was welcomed with unmingled delight by the brothers of *the Mountain*. The two ladies who had formerly given life

and grace to their society were both recently married; Miss Erskine and Miss Cranstoun, who gave her hand (a few months later) to Godfrey Wenceslaus, Count of Purgstall, a nobleman of large possessions in Styria, who had been spending some time in Edinburgh. Scott's house in South Castle Street—(soon after exchanged for one of the same sort in North Castle Street, which he purchased, and inhabited down to 1826)—became now to the *Mountain* what Cranstoun's and Erskine's had been while their accomplished sisters remained with them. The officers of the Light Horse, too, established a club among themselves, supping once a week at each other's houses in rotation. The young lady thus found two somewhat different, but both highly agreeable, circles ready to receive her with cordial kindness; and the evening hours passed in a round of innocent gaiety, all the arrangements being conducted in a simple and inexpensive fashion suitable to young people whose days were mostly laborious, and very few of their purses heavy. Scott and Erskine had always been fond of the theatre; the pretty bride was passionately so—and I doubt if they ever spent a week in Edinburgh without indulging themselves in this amusement. But regular dinners and crowded assemblies were in those years quite unthought of. Perhaps nowhere could have been found a society on so small a scale including more of vigorous intellect, varied information, elegant tastes, and real virtue, affection, and mutual confidence. How often have I heard its members, in the midst of the wealth and honours which most of them in due season attained, sigh over the recollection of those humbler days, when love and ambition were young and buoyant, and no difference of opinion was able to bring even a momentary chill over the warmth of friendship.

In the summer of this year Scott had hired a pretty cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, about six miles from Edinburgh. It is a small house, but with one room of good dimensions, which Mrs. Scott's taste set off to advantage at very humble cost—a paddock or two—and a garden (commanding a most beautiful view) in which Scott delighted to train his flowers and creepers. Never, I have heard him say, was he prouder of his handiwork than when he had completed the fashioning of a rustic archway, now overgrown with hoary ivy, by way of ornament to the entrance from the Edinburgh road. In this retreat they spent some happy summers, receiving the visits of their few chosen friends from the neighbouring city, and wandering at will amidst some of the most romantic scenery that Scotland can boast—Scott's dearest haunt in the days of his boyish ramblings. They had neighbours, too, who were not slow to cultivate their acquaintance. With the Clerks of Pennycuik, with Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, who then occupied the charming villa of Auchendinny, and with Lord Woodhouselee, Scott had from an earlier date been familiar; and it was while at Lasswade that he formed intimacies, even more important in their results, with the noble families of Melville and Buccleuch, both of whom have castles in the same valley. It was here that when his warm heart was beating with young and happy love, and his whole mind and spirit were nerved by new motives for exertion; it was here, that in the ripened glow of manhood he seems to have first felt something of his real strength, and poured him-

self out in those splendid original ballads which were at once to fix his name.

I must, however, approach these more leisurely. When William Erskine was in London in the spring of this year, he happened to meet in society with Matthew Gregory Lewis, M.P. for Hindon, whose romance of *The Monk*, with the ballads which it included, had made for him, in those barren days, a brilliant reputation. This good-natured fopling, the pet and plaything of certain fashionable circles, was then busy with that miscellany which at length came out in 1801, under the name of *Tales of Wonder*, and was beating up in all quarters for contributions. Erskine showed Lewis Scott's versions of *Lenore* and the *Wild Huntsman*; and when he mentioned that his friend had other specimens of the German *diablerie* in his portfolio, the collector anxiously requested that Scott might be enlisted in his cause. The brushwood splendour of *The Monk's* fame,

"The false and foolish fire that's whist' about  
By popular air, and glares, and then goes out,"\*

had a dazzling influence among the unknown aspirants of Edinburgh; and Scott, who was perhaps at all times rather disposed to hold popular favour as the surest test of literary merit, and who certainly continued through life to over-estimate all talents except his own, considered this invitation as a very flattering compliment. He immediately wrote to Lewis, placing whatever pieces he had translated and imitated from the German *Volkslieder* at his disposal.

When Lewis came to Edinburgh he met Scott, and the latter told Allan Cunningham, thirty years afterwards, that he thought he had never felt such elation as when the "*Monk*" invited him to dine with him for the first time at his hotel. Since he gazed on Burns in his seventeenth year, he had seen no one enjoying, by general consent, the fame of a poet; and Lewis, whatever Scott might, on maturer consideration, think of his title to such fame, had certainly done him no small service; for the ballads of Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene, and Durandarte, had rekindled effectually in his breast the spark of poetical ambition. Lady Charlotte Campbell (now Bury), always distinguished by her passion for elegant letters, was ready, "in pride of rank, in beauty's bloom," to do the honours of Scotland to the "*Lion of Mayfair*;" and I believe Scott's first introduction to Lewis took place at one of her ladyship's parties. But they met frequently, and, among other places, at Dalkeith—as witness one of Scott's marginal notes, written in 1825, on Lord Byron's Diary.—"Poor fellow," says Byron, "he died a martyr to his new riches—of a second visit to Jamaica.

"I'd give the lands of Deloraine  
Dark Musgrave were alive again;"

that is,

"I-would give many a sugar-cane  
Monk Lewis were alive again."

To which Scott adds:—"I would pay my share! How few friends are

\* Oldham,

has whose faults are only ridiculous. His visit was one of humanity to ameliorate the condition of his slaves. He did much good by stealth, and was a most generous creature . . . . Lewis was fonder of great people than he ought to have been, either as a man of talent or as a man of fashion. He had always dukes and duchesses in his mouth, and was pathetically fond of any one that had a title. You would have sworn he had been a *parvenu* of yesterday, yet he had lived all his life in good society . . . . Mat had queerish eyes—they projected like those of some insects, and were flattish on the orbit. His person was extremely small and boyish—he was indeed the least man I ever saw, to be strictly well and neatly made. I remember a picture of him by Saunders being handed round at Dalkeith House. The artist had ingeniously flung a dark folding mantle around the form, under which was half hid a dagger, a dark lantern, or some such cutthroat appurtenance; with all this the features were preserved and ennobled. It passed from hand to hand into that of Henry, Duke of Buccleuch, who, hearing the general voice affirm that it was very like, said aloud, 'Like Mat Lewis! Why, that picture's like a MAN!' He looked, and lo, Mat Lewis's head was at his elbow. This boyishness went through life with him. He was a child, and a spoiled child, but a child of high imagination; and so he wasted himself on ghost stories and German romances. He had the finest ear for rhythm. I ever met with—finer than Byron's."

During Lewis's stay in Scotland this year, he spent a day or two with Scott at Musselburgh, where the yeomanry corps were in quarters. Scott received him in his lodgings, under the roof of an ancient dame, who afforded him much amusement by her daily colloquies with the fishwomen—the *Mucklebackets* of the place. His delight in studying the dialect of these people is well remembered by the survivors of the cavalry, and must have astonished the stranger dandy. While walking about before dinner on one of these days, Mr. Skene's recitation of the German *Kriegeslied*, "Der Abschied's Tag ist da" (the day of departure is come), delighted both Lewis and Scott; and the latter produced next morning that spirited little piece in the same measure, which, embodying the volunteer ardour of the time, was forthwith adopted as the troop-song of the Edinburgh Light Horse.

In January, 1799, Mr. Lewis appears negotiating with a bookseller, named Bell, for the publication of Scott's version of Goethe's tragedy, "Goetz von Berlichingen of the Iron Hand." Bell seems finally to have purchased the copyright for twenty-five guineas, and twenty-five more to be paid in case of a second edition—which was never called for until long after the copyright had expired. Lewis writes, "I have made him distinctly understand, that, if you accept so small a sum, it will be only because this is your first publication." The edition of Lenore and the Yager, in 1796, had been completely forgotten; and Lewis thought of those ballads exactly as if they had been MS. contributions to his own Tales of Wonder, still lingering on the threshold of the press. The *Goetz* appeared accordingly, with Scott's name on the title-page, in the following February.

In March, 1799, he carried his wife to London, this being the first time that he had seen the metropolis since the days of his infancy. The

acquaintance of Lewis served to introduce him to some literary and fashionable society, with which he was much amused; but his great anxiety was to examine the antiquities of the Tower and Westminster Abbey, and to make some researches among the MSS. of the British Museum. He found his Goetz spoken of favourably, on the whole, by the critics of the time; but it does not appear to have attracted general attention. The truth is, that, to have given Goethe anything like a fair chance with the English public, his first drama ought to have been translated at least ten years before. The imitators had been more fortunate than the master, and this work, which constitutes one of the most important landmarks in the history of German literature, had not come even into Scott's hands until he had familiarized himself with the ideas which it first opened, in the feeble and puny mimicries of writers already forgotten. He readily discovered the vast gulf which separated Goethe from the German dramatists on whom he had heretofore been employing himself; but the public in general drew no such distinctions, and the English Goetz was soon afterwards condemned to oblivion through the unsparing ridicule showered on whatever bore the name of *German play*, by the inimitable caricature of *The Rovers*.

Scott executed about the same time his *House of Aspen*, rather a *rifacimento* than a translation from one of the minor dramatists that had crowded to partake the popularity of Goetz of the Iron Hand. It also was sent to Lewis in London, where having first been read and much recommended by the celebrated actress, Mrs. Easton, it was taken up by Kemble, and I believe actually put in rehearsal for the stage. If so, the trial did not encourage further preparation, and the notion was abandoned. Discovering the play thirty years after among his papers, Scott sent it to one of the literary almanacks (the *Keepsake* of 1829).

I incline to believe that the *House of Aspen* was written after Scott's return from London; but it has been mentioned in the same page with the Goetz, to avoid any recurrence to either the German or the Germanized dramas. His return was accelerated by the domestic calamity which forms the subject of the following letter:—

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—

“I cannot express the feelings with which I sit down to the discharge of my present melancholy duty, nor how much I regret the accident which has removed me from Edinburgh, at a time, of all others, when I should have wished to administer to your distress all the consolation which sympathy and affection could have afforded. Your own principles of virtue and religion will, however, I well know, be your best support in this heaviest of human afflictions. The removal of my regretted parent from this earthly scene is to him, doubtless, the happiest change, if the firmest integrity and the best-spent life can entitle us to judge of the state of our departed friends. When we reflect upon this we ought almost to suppress the selfish feelings of regret that he was not spared to us a little longer, especially when we consider that it was not the will of Heaven that he should share the most inestimable of its earthly blessings, such a portion of health, as might have enabled him to enjoy his family. To my dear father, then, the putting off this mortal mask was happiness, and to us who remain, a

lesson so to live that we also may have hope in our latter end ; and with you, my dearest mother, remain many blessings and some duties, a grateful recollection of which will, I am sure, contribute to calm the current of your affliction. The affection and attention which you have a right to expect from your children, and which I consider as the best tribute we can pay to the memory of the parent we have lost, will also, I am sure, contribute its full share to the alleviation of your distress. The situation of Charlotte's health, in its present delicate state, prevented me from setting off directly for Scotland, when I heard that immediate danger was apprehended. I am now glad I did not do so, as I could not with the utmost expedition have reached Edinburgh before the lamented event had taken place. The situation of my affairs must detain me here for a few days more ; the instant I can I will set off for Scotland. I need not tell you not even to attempt to answer this letter—such an exertion would be both unnecessary and improper. John or Tom will let me know how my sister and you do. I am ever, dear mother, your dutiful and affectionate son,

“W. S.”

“P.S.—Permit me, my dear madam, to add a line to Scott's letter, to express to you how sincerely I feel for your loss, and how much I regret that I am not near you to try by the most tender care to soften the pain that so great a misfortune must inflict on you, and on all those who had the happiness of being connected with him. I hope soon to have the pleasure of returning to you, and to convince you of the sincere affection of your daughter,

“M. C. S.”

The death of this worthy man, in his seventieth year, after a long series of feeble health and suffering, was an event which could only be regarded as a great deliverance to himself. He had had a succession of paralytic attacks, under which, mind as well as body had by degrees been laid quite prostrate.

Mr. Thomas Scott continued to manage his father's business. He married early ; he was in his circle of society extremely popular ; and his prospects seemed fair in all things. The property left by the old gentleman was less than had been expected, but sufficient to make ample provision for his widow, and a not inconsiderable addition to the resources of those among whom the remainder was divided.

Scott's mother and sister, both much exhausted with their attendance on a protracted sick-bed, and the latter already in the first stage of the malady which in two years more carried her also to her grave, spent the greater part of the following summer and autumn in his cottage at Lasswade.

There he was now again labouring assiduously in the service of Lewis's “hobgoblin repast,” and the specimens of his friend's letters on his contributions, as they were successively forwarded to London, which were printed by way of appendix to his *Essay on Popular Poetry*, in 1830, may perhaps be sufficient for the reader's curiosity.

But Lewis's collection did not engross the leisure of this summer. It produced also what Scott justly calls his “first serious attempts in verse ;” and of these the earliest appears to have been the *Glenfinlas*. Here the

scene is laid in the most favourite district of his favourite Perthshire Highlands ; and the Gaelic tradition on which it is founded was far more likely to draw out the secret strength of his genius, as well as to arrest the feelings of his countrymen, than any subject with which the stores of German *diablerie* could have supplied him.

The next of these compositions was, I believe, the Eve of St. John, in which Scott repeoples the tower of Smailholm, the awe-inspiring haunt of his infancy ; and here he touches, for the first time, the one superstition which can still be appealed to with full and perfect effect ; the only one which lingers in minds long since weaned from all sympathy with the machinery of witches and goblins. And surely this mystery was never touched with more thrilling skill than in that noble ballad. It is the first of his original pieces, too, in which he uses the measure of his own favourite minstrels ; a measure which the monotony of mediocrity had long and successfully been labouring to degrade, but in itself adequate to the expression of the highest thoughts as well as the gentlest emotions, and capable, in fit hands, of as rich a variety of music as any other of modern times. This was written at Mertoun House in the autumn of 1799. Some dilapidations had taken place in the tower of Smailholm, and Harden, being informed of the fact, and entreated with needless earnestness by his kinsman to arrest the hand of the spoiler, requested playfully a ballad, of which Smailholm should be the scene, as the price of his assent.

Then came The Grey Brother, founded on another superstition, which seems to have been almost as ancient as the belief in ghosts ; namely, that the holiest service of the altar cannot go on in the presence of an unclean person—a heinous sinner unconfessed and unabsolved. The fragmentary form of this poem greatly heightens the awfulness of its impression ; and in construction and metre, the verses which really belong to the story appear to me the happiest that have ever been produced expressly in imitation of the ballad of the middle age. In the stanzas, previously quoted, on the scenery of the Esk, however beautiful in themselves, and however interesting now as marking the locality of the composition, he must be allowed to have lapsed into another strain, and produced a *pannus purpureus* which interferes with and mars the general texture.

He wrote at the same period the fine chivalrous ballad, entitled The Fire King, in which there is more than enough to make us forgive the machinery. It was also in the course of this autumn that he first visited Bothwell Castle, the seat of Archibald Lord Douglas, who had married the Lady Frances Scott, sister to Henry, Duke of Buccleuch ; a woman whose many amiable virtues were combined with extraordinary strength of mind, and who had, from the first introduction of the young poet at Dalkeith, formed high anticipations of his future career. Lady Douglas was one of his dearest friends through life ; and now, under her roof, he met with one whose abilities and accomplishments not less qualified her to estimate him, and who still survives to lament the only event that could have interrupted their cordial confidence—the Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the celebrated John, Earl of Bute. These ladies, who were sisters in mind, feeling, and affection, he visited among scenes

the noblest and most interesting that all Scotland can show—alike famous in history and romance; and he was not unwilling to make Bothwell and Blantyre the subject of another ballad.

Having again given a week to Liddisdale, in company with Mr. Shortreed, he spent a few days at Rosebank, and was preparing to return to Edinburgh for the winter, when James Ballantyne called on him one morning, and begged him to supply a few paragraphs on some legal question of the day for his newspaper. Scott complied; and carrying his article himself to the printing-office, took with him also some of his recent pieces, designed to appear in Lewis's collection. With these, especially, as his *Memorandum* says, the "Morlachian fragment after Goethe," Ballantyne was charmed, and he expressed his regret that Lewis's book was so long in appearing. Scott talked of Lewis with rapture; and, after reciting some of his stanzas, said, "I ought to apologize to you for having troubled you with anything of my own when I had things like this for your ear."—"I felt at once," says Ballantyne, "that his own verses were far above what Lewis could ever do, and though when I said this he dissented, yet he seemed pleased with the warmth of my approbation." At parting, Scott threw out a casual observation, that he wondered his old friend did not try to get some little booksellers' work, "to keep his types in play during the rest of the week." Ballantyne answered, that such an idea had not before occurred to him, that he had no acquaintance with the Edinburgh "trade;" but, if he had, his types were good, and he thought he could afford to work more cheaply than town printers. Scott, "with his good-humoured smile," said, "You had better try what you can do. You have been praising my little ballads; suppose you print off a dozen copies or so of as many as will make a pamphlet, sufficient to let my Edinburgh acquaintances judge of your skill for themselves." Ballantyne assented; and I believe exactly twelve copies of William and Ellen, The Fire-King, The Chase, and a few more of those pieces, were thrown off accordingly, with the title (alluding to the long delay of Lewis's collection) of *Apology for Tales of Terror—1799*. This first specimen of a press afterwards so celebrated, pleased Scott, and he said to Ballantyne, "I have been for years collecting old Border ballads, and I think I could, with little trouble, put together such a selection from them as might make a neat little volume, to sell for four or five shillings. I will talk to some of the booksellers about it when I get to Edinburgh, and if the thing goes on you shall be the printer." Ballantyne highly relished the proposal, and the result of this little experiment changed wholly the course of his worldly fortunes, as well as of his friend's.

Shortly after the commencement of the Winter Session, the office of Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire became vacant by the death of an early ally of Scott's, Andrew Plummer of Middlestead, a scholar and antiquary, who had entered with zeal into his ballad-researches, and whose name occurs accordingly more than once in the notes to the *Border Minstrelsy*. Perhaps the community of their tastes may have had some part in suggesting to the Duke of Buccleuch that Scott might fitly succeed Mr. Plummer in the magistrature. Be that as it might, his Grace's influence was used with the late Lord Melville, who, in those days, had the general control of the Crown patronage in Scotland, and his lordship was prepared

to look favourably on Scott's pretensions to some office of this description. Though neither the Duke nor this able minister were at all addicted to literature, they had both seen Scott frequently under their own roofs, and been pleased with his manners and conversation, and he had by this time come to be on terms of affectionate intimacy with some of the younger members of either family. The Earl of Dalkeith (afterwards Duke Charles of Buccleuch) and his brother, Lord James Scott (now Lord Montagu), had been participating, with kindred ardour, in the military patriotism of the period, and had been thrown into Scott's society under circumstances well qualified to ripen acquaintance into confidence. The Honourable Robert Dundas, eldest son of the statesman whose title he has inherited, had been one of Scott's companions in the High School ; and he, too, had been of late a lively partaker in the business of the yeomanry cavalry ; and last, not least, Scott always remembered with gratitude the strong intercession on this occasion of Lord Melville's nephew, the Right Honourable William Dundas, then Secretary to the Board of Control, and now Lord Clerk Register for Scotland.

His appointment to the *sheriffship* bears date 16th December, 1799. It secured him an annual salary of £300 ; an addition to his resources which at once relieved his mind from whatever degree of anxiety he might have felt in considering the prospect of an increasing family, along with the ever precarious chances of a profession, in the daily drudgery of which it is impossible to suppose that he ever could have found much pleasure. The duties of the office were far from heavy ; the district, small, peaceful, and pastoral, was in great part the property of the Duke of Buccleuch ; and he turned with redoubled zeal to his project of editing the ballads, many of the best of which belonged to this very district of his favourite Border—those “tales” which, as the Dedication of the *Minstrelsy* expresses it, had “in elder times celebrated the prowess and cheered the halls” of his noble patron's ancestors.

## CHAPTER V.

### BORDER MINSTRELSY—LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL BEGUN—PUBLICATION OF SIR TRISTREM.

JAMES BALLANTYNE, in his *Memorandum*, after mentioning his ready acceptance of Scott's proposal to print the Minstrelsy, adds—"I do not believe that, even at this time, he seriously contemplated giving himself much to literature." I confess, however, that a letter of his, addressed to Ballantyne in the spring of 1800, inclines me to question the accuracy of this impression. After alluding to an intention which he had entertained, in consequence of the delay of Lewis's collection, to *publish* an edition of the ballads contained in his own little volume, entitled "Apology for Tales of Terror," he goes on to detail plans for the future direction of his printer's career, which were, no doubt, primarily suggested by the friendly interest he took in Ballantyne's fortunes; but there are some hints which, considering what afterwards did take place, lead me to suspect that even thus early the writer contemplated the possibility at least of being himself very intimately connected with the result of these air-drawn schemes. The letter is as follows:

*To Mr. J. Ballantyne, Kelso Mail Office, Kelso.*

"Castle Street, 22nd April, 1800.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I have your favour, since the receipt of which some things have occurred which induce me to postpone my intention of publishing my ballads, particularly a letter from a friend, assuring me that the *Tales of Wonder* are actually in the printer's hand. In this situation I endeavour to strengthen my small stock of patience, which has been nearly exhausted by the delay of this work, to which (though for that reason alone) I almost regret having promised assistance. I am still resolved to have recourse to your press for the Ballads of the Border, which are in some forwardness.

"I have now to request your forgiveness for mentioning a plan which your friend Gillon and I have talked over together with a view as well to the public advantage as to your individual interest. It is nothing short of a migration from Kelso to this place, which I think might be effected upon a prospect of a very flattering nature.

"Three branches of printing are quite open in Edinburgh, all of which I am well convinced you have both the ability and inclination to unite in your person. The first is that of an editor of a newspaper which

shall contain something of an uniform historical deduction of events distinct from the farrago of detached and unconnected plagiarisms from the London paragraphs of 'The Sun.' Perhaps it might be possible (and Gillon has promised to make inquiry about it) to treat with the proprietors of some established paper—suppose the 'Caledonian Mercury'—and we would all struggle to obtain for it some celebrity. To this might be added a 'Monthly Magazine,' and 'Caledonian Annual Register,' if you will; for both of which, with the excellent literary assistance which Edinburgh at present affords, there is a fair opening. The next object would naturally be the execution of Session papers, the best paid work which a printer undertakes, and of which, I dare say, you would soon have a considerable share; for as you make it your business to superintend the proofs yourself, your education and abilities would insure your employers against the gross and provoking blunders which the poor composers are often obliged to submit to. The publication of works, either ancient or modern, opens a third fair field for ambition. The only gentleman who attempts anything in that way is in very bad health, nor can I, at any rate, compliment either the accuracy or the execution of his press. I believe it is well understood that with equal attention, an Edinburgh press would have superior advantages even to those of the metropolis; and though I would not advise launching into that line at once, yet it would be easy to feel your way by occupying your press in this manner on vacant days only.

"It appears to me that such a plan, judiciously adopted and diligently pursued, opens a fair road to an ample fortune. In the meanwhile, the 'Kelso Mail' might be so arranged as to be still a source of some advantage to you; and I dare say, if wanted, pecuniary assistance might be procured to assist you at the outset, either upon terms of a share or otherwise; but I refer you for particulars to Joseph, in whose room I am now assuming the pen, for reasons too distressing to be declared, but at which you will readily guess. I hope, at all events, you will impute my interference to anything rather than an impertinent intermeddling with your concerns on the part of, dear sir, your obedient servant,

"WALTER SCOTT."

The Joseph Gillon here named was a Writer to the Signet of some eminence; a man of strong abilities and genuine wit and humour, for whom Scott, as well as Ballantyne, had a warm regard.\*

To return to the Minstrelsy. Scott found able assistants in the completion of his design. Richard Heber (long Member of Parliament for the University of Oxford) happened to spend this winter in Edinburgh, and was welcomed, as his talents and accomplishments entitled him to be, by the cultivated society of the place. With Scott, his multifarious learning, particularly his profound knowledge of the literary monuments of the middle ages, soon drew him into habits of close alliance; the stores of his library, even then extensive, were freely laid open, and his own oral commentaries were not less valuable. But through him Scott made

\* Calling on him one day in his writing office, Scott said, "Why, Joseph, this place is as hot as an oven." "Well," quoth Gillon, "and isn't it here that I make my bread?"

acquaintance with a person still more qualified to give him effectual aid in this undertaking ; a native of the Border—from infancy, like himself, an enthusiastic lover of its legends, and who had already saturated his mind with every species of lore that could throw light upon these relics.

Few who read these pages can be unacquainted with the leading facts in the history of John Leyden. Few can need to be reminded that this extraordinary man, born in a shepherd's cottage in one of the wildest valleys of Roxburghshire, and of course almost entirely self-educated, had, before he attained his nineteenth year, confounded the doctors of Edinburgh by the portentous mass of his acquisitions in almost every department of learning. He had set the extremest penury at utter defiance, or rather he had never been conscious that it could operate as a bar ; for bread and water, and access to books and lectures, comprised all within the bound of his wishes ; and thus he toiled and battled at the gates of science after science, until his unconquerable perseverance carried everything before it ; and yet, with this monastic abstemiousness and iron hardness of will, perplexing those about him by manners and habits in which it was hard to say whether the moss-trooper or the schoolman of former days most prevailed, he was at heart a poet.

Archibald Constable, in after life one of the most eminent of British publishers, was at this period the keeper of a small book-shop, into which few but the poor students of Leyden's order had hitherto found their way. Heber, in the course of his bibliomaniacal prowlings, discovered that it contained some of

"The small old volumes, dark with tarnished gold,"

which were already the Delilahs of his imagination ; and, moreover, that the young bookseller had himself a strong taste for such charmers. Frequenting the place accordingly, he observed with some curiosity the barbarous aspect and gestures of another daily visitant, who came not to purchase evidently, but to pore over the more recondite articles of the collection—often balanced for hours on a ladder with a folio in his hand, like Dominie Sampson. The English virtuoso was on the look-out for any books or MSS. that might be of use to the editor of the projected *Minstrelsy*, and some casual colloquy led to the discovery that this unshorn stranger was, amidst the endless labyrinth of his lore, a master of legend and tradition—an enthusiastic collector and most skilful expounder of these very Border ballads in particular. Scott heard with much interest Heber's account of his odd acquaintance, and found, when introduced, the person whose initials, affixed to a series of pieces in verse, chiefly translations from Greek, Latin, and the Northern languages, scattered, during the last three or four years, over the pages of the *Edinburgh Magazine*, had often much excited his curiosity, as various indications pointed out the Scotch Border for the native district of this unknown "J. L."

These new friendships led to a great change in Leyden's position, purposes, and prospects. He was presently received into the best society of Edinburgh, where his strange, wild uncouthness of demeanour does not seem to have at all interfered with the general appreciation of his genius, his gigantic endowments, and really amiable virtues. Fixing his

ambition on the East, where he hoped to rival the achievements of Sir William Jones, he at length, about the beginning of 1802, obtained the promise of some literary appointment in the East India Company's service; but when the time drew near, it was discovered that the patronage of the season had been exhausted, with the exception of one *surgeon-assistant's* commission—which had been with difficulty secured for him by Mr. William Dundas; who, moreover, was obliged to inform him that, if he accepted it, he must be qualified to pass his medical trials within six months. This news, which would have crushed any other man's hopes to the dust, was only a welcome fillip to the ardour of Leyden. He that same hour grappled with a new science, in full confidence that whatever ordinary men could do in three or four years, his energy could accomplish in as many months; took his degree accordingly in the beginning of 1803, having just before published his beautiful poem, the "Scenes of Infancy;" sailed to India; raised for himself, within seven short years, the reputation of the most marvellous of Orientalists; and died, in the midst of the proudest hopes, at the same age with Burns and Byron, in 1811.

But to return:—Leyden was enlisted by Scott in the service of Lewis, and immediately contributed a ballad, called the *The Elf-King*, to the *Tales of Terror*. Those highly spirited pieces, *The Count of Keildar*, *Lord Soulis*, and *The Mermaid*, were furnished for the original department of Scott's own collection; and the *Dissertation on Fairies*, prefixed to its second volume, "although arranged and digested by the editor, abounds with instances of such curious reading as Leyden only had read, and was originally compiled by him;" but not the least of his labours was in the collection of the old ballads themselves. When he first conversed with Ballantyne on the subject of the proposed work, and the printer signified his belief that a single volume of moderate size would be sufficient for the materials, Leyden exclaimed, "Dash it! does Mr. Scott mean another thin thing like *Goetz of Berlichingen*? I have more than that in my head myself: we shall turn out three or four such volumes at least." He went to work stoutly in the realization of these wider views. "In this labour," says Scott, "he was equally interested by friendship for the editor, and by his own patriotic zeal for the honour of the Scottish Borders; and both may be judged of from the following circumstance. An interesting fragment had been obtained of an ancient historical ballad; but the remainder, to the great disturbance of the editor and his coadjutor, was not to be recovered. Two days afterwards, while the editor was sitting with some company after dinner, a sound was heard at a distance like that of the whistling of a tempest through the torn rigging of the vessel which scuds before it. The sounds increased as they approached more near; and Leyden (to the great astonishment of such of the guests as did not know him) burst into the room, chanting the desiderated ballad with the most enthusiastic gesture, and all the energy of what he used to call the *saw-tones* of his voice. It turned out that he had walked between forty and fifty miles and back again, for the sole purpose of visiting an old person who possessed this precious remnant of antiquity."\*

\* *Essay on the Life of Leyden—Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. iv. p. 165.

Allusion to the progress of Leyden's fortunes will occur in a letter to be quoted hereafter. I may refer the reader, for further particulars, to the biographical sketch by Scott from which the preceding anecdote is taken. Many tributes to his memory are scattered over his friend's other works, both prose and verse; and above all, Scott did not forget him when exploring, three years after his death, the scenery of his Mermaid:—

"Scarba's isle, whose tortured shore  
Still rings to Cornevrekan's roar,  
And lonely Colonsay;—  
Scenes sung by him who sings no more:  
His bright and brief career is o'er,  
And mute his tuneful strains;  
Quenched is his lamp of varied lore,  
That loved the light of song to pour;  
A distant and a deadly shore  
Has Leyden's cold remains!"\*

During the years 1800 and 1801, the Minstrelsy formed its editor's chief occupation—a labour of love truly, if ever such there was; but neither this nor his sheriffship interfered with his regular attendance at the bar, the abandonment of which was all this while as far as it ever had been from his imagination, or that of any of his friends. He continued to have his summer head-quarters at Lasswade; and Mr. (now Sir John) Stoddart, who visited him there in the course of his Scottish tour,\* dwells on "the simple unostentatious elegance of the cottage, and the domestic picture which he there contemplated—a man of native kindness and cultivated talent, passing the intervals of a learned profession amidst scenes highly favourable to his poetic inspirations, not in churlish and rustic solitude, but in the daily exercise of the most precious sympathies as a husband, a father, and a friend." His means of hospitality were now much enlarged, and the cottage, on a Saturday and Sunday at least, was seldom without visitors.

Among other indications of greater ease in his circumstances, which I find in his letter-book, he writes to Heber, after his return to London in May, 1800, to request his good offices on behalf of Mrs. Scott, who had "set her heart on a phaeton, at once strong, and low, and handsome, and not to cost more than thirty guineas;" which combination of advantages Heber seems to have found by no means easy of attainment. The phaeton was, however, discovered; and its springs must soon have been put to a sufficient trial, for this was "the first wheeled carriage that ever penetrated into Liddisdale"—namely, in August, 1800. The friendship of the Buccleuch family now placed better means of research at his disposal, and Lord Dalkeith had taken special care that there should be a band of pioneers in waiting for his orders when he reached Hermitage.

Though he had not given up Lasswade, his sheriffship now made it necessary for him that he should be frequently in Ettrick Forest. On such occasions he took up his lodgings in the little inn at Clovenford, a favourite fishing station on the road from Edinburgh to Selkirk. From

\* Lord of the Isles, Canto iv. st. 11.

† The account of this tour was published in 1801.

this place he could ride to the county town whenever business required his presence, and he was also within a few miles of the vales of Yarrow and Ettrick, where he obtained large accessions to his store of ballads. It was in one of these excursions that, penetrating beyond St. Mary's Lake, he found a hospitable reception at the farm of *Blackhouse*, situated on the Douglas-burn, then tenanted by a remarkable family, to which I have already made allusion—that of William Laidlaw. He was then a very young man, but the extent of his acquirements was already as noticeable as the vigour and originality of his mind; and their correspondence, where “Sir” passes, at a few bounds, through “Dear Sir,” and “Dear Mr. Laidlaw,” to “Dear Willie,” shows how speedily this new acquaintance had warmed into a very tender affection. Laidlaw's zeal about the ballads was repaid by Scott's anxious endeavours to get him removed from a sphere for which, he writes, “it is no flattery to say that you are much too good.”

James Hogg had spent ten years of his life in the service of Mr. Laidlaw's father, but, although his own various accounts of his early days are not to be reconciled with each other as to minute particulars of date and locality, he seems to have passed into that of another sheep-farmer in a neighbouring valley, before Scott first visited Blackhouse. Be that as it may, William Laidlaw and Hogg had been for years the most intimate of friends, and the former took care that Scott should see without delay, one whose enthusiasm about the minstrelsy of the Forest was equal to his own, and whose mother, then an aged woman, though she lived many years afterwards, was celebrated for having by heart several ballads in a more perfect form than any other inhabitant of the Vale of Ettrick.

Scott opened in the same year a correspondence with the venerable Bishop of Dromore, who seems, however, to have done little more than express a warm interest in an undertaking so nearly resembling that which will ever keep his own name in remembrance. He had more success in his applications to a more unpromising quarter—namely, with Joseph Ritson, the ancient and virulent assailant of Bishop Percy's editorial character. This narrow-minded, sour, and dogmatical little word-catcher had hated the very name of a Scotsman, and was utterly incapable of sympathizing with any of the higher views of his new correspondent. Yet the bland courtesy of Scott disarmed even this half-crazy pedant; and he communicated the stores of his really valuable learning in a manner that seems to have greatly surprised all who had hitherto held any intercourse with him on antiquarian topics. It astonished, above all, the late aimable and elegant George Ellis, whose acquaintance was about the same time opened to Scott through their common friend Heber. Mr. Ellis was now busily engaged in collecting the materials for his charming works, entitled *Specimens of Ancient English Poetry*, and *Specimens of Ancient English Romance*. The correspondence between him and Scott soon came to be constant. They met personally, not long after the correspondence had commenced, conceived for each other a cordial respect and affection, and continued on a footing of almost brotherly intimacy ever after. To this valuable alliance Scott owed, among other advantages, his early and ready admission to the acquaintance and

familiarity of Ellis's bosom friend, his coadjutor in the Antijacobin, and the confidant of all his literary schemes, the illustrious statesman, Mr. Canning.

The first letter of Scott to Ellis is dated March 27, 1801, and begins thus :—"Sir,—As I feel myself highly flattered by your inquiries, I lose no time in answering them to the best of my ability. Your eminence in the literary world, and the warm praises of our mutual friend Heber, had made me long wish for an opportunity of being known to you. I enclose the first sheet of *Sir Tristrem*, that you may not so much rely upon my opinion as upon that which a specimen of the style and versification may enable your better judgment to form for itself. . . . These pages are transcribed by Leyden, an excellent young man of uncommon talents, patronized by Heber, and who is of the utmost assistance to my literary undertakings."

As Scott's edition of *Sir Tristrem* did not appear until May, 1804, and he and Leyden were busy with the *Border Minstrelsy* when his correspondence with Ellis commenced, this early indication of his labours on the former work may require explanation. The truth is, that both Scott and Leyden, having eagerly arrived at the belief, from which neither of them ever permitted himself to falter, that the "*Sir Tristrem*" of the Auchinleck MS. was virtually, if not literally, the production of Thomas the Rhymer, laird of Ercildoune, in Berwickshire, who flourished at the close of the thirteenth century—the original intention had been to give it not only a place, but a very prominent one, in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The doubts and difficulties which Ellis suggested, however, though they did not shake Scott in his opinion as to the parentage of the romance, induced researches which occupied so much time, and gave birth to notes so bulky, that he eventually found it expedient first to pass it over in the two volumes of the *Minstrelsy* which appeared in 1802, and then even in the third, which followed a year later; thus reserving *Tristrem* for a separate publication, which did not take place until after Leyden had sailed for India.

Scott spent the Christmas of 1801 at Hamilton Palace, in Lanarkshire. To Lady Anne Hamilton he had been introduced by her half-sister, Lady Charlotte Campbell, and both the late and the present Dukes of Hamilton appear to have partaken of Lady Anne's admiration for *Glenfinlas* and the *Eve of St. John*. A morning's ramble to the majestic ruins of the old baronial castle on the precipitous banks of the *Evan*, and among the adjoining remains of the primeval Caledonian forest, suggested to him a ballad, not inferior in execution to any that he had hitherto produced, and especially interesting as the first in which he grapples with the world of picturesque incident unfolded in the authentic annals of Scotland. With the magnificent localities before him, he skilfully interwove the daring assassination of the Regent Murray by one of the clansmen of "the princely Hamilton." Had the subject been taken up in after years, we might have had another *Marmion* or *Heart of Mid-Lothian*; for in *Cadyow Castle* we have the materials and outline of more than one of the noblest of ballads.

Not long before this piece began to be handed about in Edinburgh, Thomas Campbell had made his appearance there, and at once seized a

high place in the literary world by his Pleasures of Hope. Among the most eager to welcome him had been Scott.

Scott finished his Cadyow Castle before the last sheets of the second volume of his Minstrelsy had passed through the press; but "the two volumes," as Ballantyne says, "were already full to overflowing;" so it was reserved for the "threatened third." The two volumes appeared in the course of January, 1802, from the respectable house of Cadell and Davies, in the Strand; and, owing to the cold reception of Lewis's Tales of Wonder, which had come forth a year earlier, these may be said to have first introduced Scott as an original writer to the English public.

The first edition of volumes I. and II. of the Minstrelsy consisted of eight hundred copies, fifty of which were on large paper. The edition was exhausted in the course of the year, and the terms of publication having been that Scott should have half the clear profits, his share was exactly £78 10s.—a sum which certainly could not have repaid him for the actual expenditure incurred in the collection of his materials. Messrs. Cadell and Davies, however, complained, and probably with good reason, that a premature advertisement of a "second and improved edition" had rendered some copies of the first unsaleable.

I might fill many pages by transcribing letters of praise from persons of acknowledged discernment in this branch of literature; John Duke of Roxburghe is among the number, and he conveys also a complimentary message from the late Earl Spencer; Pinkerton issues his decree of approbation as *ex cathedra*; Chalmers overflows with heartier praise; and even Joseph Ritson extols his presentation copy as "the most valuable literary treasure in his possession." There follows enough of female admiration to have been dangerous for another man; a score of fine ladies contend who shall be the most extravagant in encomium—and as many professed blue stockings come after.

The approbation with which the first two volumes of the Minstrelsy were received, stimulated Scott to fresh diligence in the preparation of a third; while Sir Tristrem—it being now settled that this romance should form a separate volume—was transmitted without delay to the printer at Kelso. As early as March 30th, 1802, Ballantyne, who had just returned from London, writes thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—

"By to-morrow's Fly I shall send the remaining materials for Minstrelsy, together with three sheets of Sir Tristrem . . . I shall ever think the printing the Scottish Minstrelsy one of the most fortunate circumstances of my life. I have gained, not lost by it, in a pecuniary light; and the prospects it has been the means of opening to me, may advantageously influence my future destiny. I can never be sufficiently grateful for the interest you unceasingly take in my welfare. Your query respecting *Edinburgh*, I am yet at a loss to answer. To say truth, the expenses I have incurred in my resolution to acquire a character for elegant printing, whatever might be the result, cramp considerably my present exertions. A short time, I trust, will make me easier, and I shall then contemplate the road before me with a steady eye. One thing alone is clear—that Kelso cannot be my abiding-place for aye; sooner or

later emigrate I must and will ; but at all events I must wait till my plumè is grown. I am, dear sir, your faithful and obliged

“ J. B.”

Ritson had visited Lasswade in the course of this autumn, and his conduct had been such as to render precaution very proper in the case of one who, like Scott, was resolved to steer clear of the feuds and heart-burnings that gave rise to such scandalous scenes among the other antiquaries of the day. Leyden met Ritson at the cottage, and, far from imitating his host's forbearance, took a pleasure of tormenting the half-mad pedant by every means in his power. Among other circumstances, Scott delighted to detail the scene that occurred when his two uncouth allies first met at dinner. Well knowing Ritson's holy horror of all animal food, Leyden complained that the joint on the table was overdone. “ Indeed, for that matter,” cried he, “ meat can never be too little done, and raw is best of all.” He sent to the kitchen accordingly for a plate of literally raw beef, and manfully ate it up, with no sauce but the exquisite ruefulness of the Pythagorean's glances.

Mr. Robert Pierce Gallies, a gentleman of the Scotch bar, well known, among other things, for some excellent translations from the German, was present at the cottage another day when Ritson was in Scotland. He has described the whole scene in the second section of his *Recollections of Sir Walter Scott*,—a set of papers in which many inaccurate statements occur, but which convey, on the whole, a lively impression of the persons introduced. “ In approaching the cottage,” he says, “ I was struck with the exceeding air of neatness that prevailed around. The hand of tasteful cultivation had been there, and all methods employed to convert an ordinary thatched cottage into a handsome and comfortable abode. The doorway was in an angle formed by an original old cabin, and the additional rooms which had been built to it. In a moment I had passed through the lobby, and found myself in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Scott, and Mr. William Erskine. At this early period, Scott was more like the portrait, by Saxon, engraved for the first edition of the *Lady of the Lake*, than to any subsequent picture. He retained in features and form an impress of that elasticity and youthful vivacity, which he used to complain wore off after he was forty, and by *his own* account was exchanged for the plodding heaviness of an operose student. He had now, indeed, somewhat of a boyish gaiety of look, and in person was tall, slim, and extremely active. On my entrance, he was seated at a table near the window, and occupied in transcribing from an old MS. volume into his commonplace-book. As to costume, he was carelessly attired in a widely-made shooting-dress, with a coloured handkerchief round his neck ; the very antithesis of style usually adopted either by student or barrister. ‘ Hah ! ’ he exclaimed, ‘ welcome, thrice welcome ! for we are just proposing to have lunch, and then a long, long walk through wood and wold, in which I am sure you will join us. But no man can thoroughly appreciate the pleasure of such a life who has not known what it is to rise spiritless in a morning, and *daidle* out half the day in the Parliament House, where we must all *compear* within another fortnight ; then to spend the rest of one's time in applying proofs to *con-*

*descendences*, and hauling out papers to bamboozle judges, most of whom are *dazed* enough already. What say you, Counsellor Erskine? Come—*alla guerra*—rouse, and say whether you are for a walk to-day.’—‘Certainly, in such fine weather I don’t see what we can propose better. It is the last I shall see of the country this vacation.’—‘Nay, say not so, man; we shall all be merry twice and once yet before the evil days arrive.’—‘I’ll tell you what I have thought of this half-hour: it is a plan of mine to rent a cottage and a cabbage-garden—not here, but somewhere farther out of town, and never again, after this one session, to enter the Parliament House.’—‘And you’ll ask Ritson, perhaps,’ said Scott, ‘to stay with you, and help to consume the cabbages. Rest assured we shall both sit on the bench one day; but, heigho! we shall both have become very old and philosophical by that time.’—‘Did you not expect Lewis here this morning?’—‘Lewis, I venture to say, is not up yet, for he dined at Dalkeith yesterday, and of course found the wine very good. Besides, you know, I have entrusted him with *Finella* till his own steed gets well of a sprain, and he could not join our walking excursion.—I see you are admiring that broken sword,’ he added, addressing me, ‘and your interest would increase if you knew how much labour was required to bring it into my possession. In order to grasp that mouldering weapon, I was obliged to drain the well at the Castle of Dunnottar. But it is time to set out; and here is one *friend*’ (addressing himself to a large dog) ‘who is very impatient to be in the field. He tells me he knows where to find a hare in the woods of Mavisbank. And here is another’ (caressing a terrier), ‘who longs to have a battle with the weasels and water-rats, and the founmart that *wons* near the caves of Gorthy: so let us be off.”

Mr. Gillies tells us that in the course of their walk to Rosslyn, Scott’s foot slipped as he was scrambling towards a cave on the edge of a precipitous bank, and that, “had there been no trees in the way, he must have been killed, but midway he was stopped by a large root of hazel, when, instead of struggling, which would have made matters greatly worse, he seemed perfectly resigned to his fate, and slipped through the tangled thicket till he lay flat on the river’s brink. He rose in an instant from his recumbent attitude, and, with a hearty laugh, called out, ‘Now, let me see who else will do the like.’ He scrambled up the cliff with alacrity, and entered the cave, where we had a long dialogue.”

Even after he was an old and hoary man, he continually encountered such risks with the same recklessness. The extraordinary strength of his hands and arms was his great reliance in all such difficulties, and if he could see anything to lay hold of, he was afraid of no leap, or, rather, hop, that came in his way. Mr. Gillies says that when they drew near the famous chapel of Rosslyn, Erskine expressed a hope that they might, as habitual visitors, escape hearing the usual endless story of the silly old woman that showed the ruins; but Scott answered, “There is a pleasure in the song which none but the songstress knows, and by telling her we know it all already, we should make the poor devil unhappy.”

On their return to the cottage, Scott inquired for the *learned cabbage-eater*, meaning Ritson, who had been expected to dinner. “Indeed,” answered his wife, “you may be happy he is not here, he is so very dis-

agreeable. Mr. Leyden, I believe, frightened him away." It turned out that it was even so. When Ritson appeared a round of cold beef was on the luncheon-table, and Mrs. Scott, forgetting his peculiar creed, offered him a slice. "The antiquary, in his indignation, expressed himself in such outrageous terms to the lady that Leyden first tried to correct him by ridicule, and then, on the madman growing more violent, became angry in his turn, till at last he threatened that if he were not silent he would *throw his neck*. Scott shook his head at this recital, which Leyden observing, grew vehement in his own justification. Scott said not a word in reply, but took up a large bunch of feathers fastened to a stick, denominated a *duster*, and shook it about the student's ears till he laughed, then changed the subject."

All this is very characteristic of the parties. Scott's playful aversion to dispute was a trait in his mind and manners that could alone have enabled him to make use at one and the same time, and for the same purpose, of two such persons as Ritson and Leyden.

Ellis urged Scott to make Sir Tristrem *volume fourth* of the Minstrelsy. "As to his hanging heavy on hand" (says he), "I admit, that as a separate publication, he may do so, but the Minstrelsy is now established as a library book, and in this bibliomaniac age, no one would think it perfect without the *preux chevalier*, if you avow the said chevalier as your adopted son. Let him, at least, be printed in the same size and paper, and then I am persuaded our booksellers will do the rest fast enough, upon the credit of your reputation." Scott replies (November), that it is now too late to alter the fate of Sir Tristrem. "Longman, of Paternoster Row, has been down here in summer, and purchased the copyright of the Minstrelsy. Sir Tristrem is a separate property, but will be on the same scale in point of size."

The next letter introduces to Ellis's personal acquaintance Leyden, who had by this time completed his medical studies, and taken his degree as a physician. In it Scott says: "At length I write to you per favour of John Leyden. I presume Heber has made you sufficiently acquainted with this original (for he is a true one), and therefore I will trust to your own kindness, should an opportunity occur of doing him any service in furthering his Indian plans. You will readily judge, from conversing with him, that with a very uncommon stock of acquired knowledge, he wants a good deal of another sort of knowledge which is only to be gleaned from an early intercourse with polished society. But he dances his bear with a good confidence, and the bear itself is a very good-natured and well-conditioned animal. All his friends are much interested about him, as the qualities both of his heart and head are very uncommon." He adds: "My third volume will appear as soon after the others as the dispatch of the printers will admit. Some parts will, I think, interest you—particularly the preservation of the entire Auld Maitland by oral tradition, probably from the reign of Edward II. or III. As I have never met with such an instance, I must request you to inquire all about it of Leyden, who was with me when I received my first copy. In the third volume I intend to publish *Cadyow Castle*, a historical sort of a ballad upon the death of the Regent Murray, and, besides this,

a long poem of my own. It will be a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza."

By the Romance of Border Chivalry, which was designed to form part of the third volume of the *Minstrelsy*, the reader is to understand the first draught of the Lay of the Last Minstrel; and the author's description of it as being "in a light-horseman sort of stanza," was probably suggested by the circumstances under which the greater part of that original draught was composed. He has told us, in his Introduction of 1830, that the poem originated in a request of the young and lovely Countess of Dalkeith, that he would write a ballad on the legend of Gulpin Horner; that he began it at Lasswade, and read the opening stanzas, as soon as they were written, to his friends, Erskine and Cranstoun; that their reception of these was apparently so cold as to discourage him, and disgust him with what he had done; but that finding, a few days afterwards, that the stanzas had nevertheless excited their curiosity and haunted their memory, he was encouraged to resume the undertaking. The scene and date of this resumption I owe to the recollection of the then cornet of the Edinburgh Light Horse. While the troop were on permanent duty at Musselburgh, in the autumnal recess of 1802, the quartermaster, during a charge on Portobello sands, received a kick of a horse, which confined him for three days to his lodgings. Mr. Skene found him busy with his pen; and he produced, before these three days expired, the first canto of the Lay, very nearly, if his friend's memory may be trusted, in the state in which it was ultimately published. That the whole poem was sketched and filled in with extraordinary rapidity there can be no difficulty in believing. He himself says (in the Introduction of 1830), that after he had once got fairly into the vein, it proceeded at the rate of about a canto in a week. The Lay, however, like the *Tristrem*, soon outgrew the dimensions which he had originally contemplated; the design of including it in the third volume of the *Minstrelsy* was of course abandoned, and it did not appear until nearly three years after that fortunate mishap on the beach of Portobello.

Scott thus writes to Ballantyne on the 21st April, 1803:—"I have to thank you for the accuracy with which the *Minstrelsy* is thrown off. Longman and Rees are delighted with the printing."

This letter is dated "No. 15 Piccadilly West," he and Mrs. Scott being there domesticated under the roof of the late M. Charles Dumergue, a man of very superior abilities and of excellent education, well known as surgeon-dentist to the royal family, who had been intimately acquainted with the *Charpentiers* in his own early life in France, and had warmly befriended Mrs. Scott's mother on her first arrival in England. M. Dumergue's house was, throughout the whole period of the emigration, liberally opened to the exiles of his native country; nor did some of the noblest of those unfortunate refugees scruple to make the freest use of his purse, as well as of his hospitality. Here Scott met much highly interesting French society, and until a child of his own was established in London, he never thought of taking up his abode anywhere else, as often as he had occasion to be in town.

The letter is addressed to "Mr. James Ballantyne, printer, Abbey Hill, Edinburgh;" which shows that before the third volume of the *Min-*

strelsy passed through the press, the migration recommended two years earlier had at length taken place. "It was about the end of 1802," says Ballantyne in his Memorandum, "that I closed with a plan so congenial to my wishes. I removed, bag and baggage, to Edinburgh, finding accommodation for two presses, and a proof one, in the precincts of Holyrood House, then deriving new lustre and interest from the recent arrival of the royal exiles of France. In these obscure premises some of the most beautiful productions of what we called *The Border Press* were printed." The Memorandum states that Scott, having renewed his hint as to pecuniary assistance, so soon as the printer found his finances straitened, "a liberal loan was advanced accordingly." Of course Scott's interest was constantly exerted in procuring employment, both legal and literary, for his friend's types; and the concern grew and prospered.

Heber, and Mackintosh, then at the height of his reputation as a conversationist, and daily advancing also at the bar, had been ready to welcome Scott in town as old friends; and Rogers, William Stewart Rose, and several other men of literary eminence were at the same time added to the list of his acquaintance. His principal object, however—having missed Leyden—was to peruse and make extracts from some MSS. in the library of John Duke of Roxburghe, for the illustration of the *Tristrem*; and he derived no small assistance in other researches of the like kind from the collections which the indefatigable and obliging Douce placed at his disposal. Having completed these labours, he and Mrs. Scott went, with Heber and Douce, to Sunninghill, where they spent a happy week, and Mr. and Mrs. Ellis heard the first two or three cantos of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* read under an old oak in Windsor Forest.

I should not omit to say that Scott was attended on this trip by a very large and fine bull-terrier, by name Camp, and that Camp's master, and mistress too, were delighted by finding that the Ellises cordially sympathized in their fondness for this animal, and indeed for all his race. At parting, Scott promised to send one of Camp's progeny, in the course of the season, to Sunninghill.

From thence they proceeded to Oxford, accompanied by Heber; and it was on this occasion, as I believe, that Scott first saw his friend's brother, Reginald, in after days the apostolic Bishop of Calcutta. He had just been declared the successful competitor for that year's poetical prize, and read to Scott at breakfast, in Brazenose College, the MS. of his *Palestine*. Scott observed that in the verses on Solomon's Temple, one striking circumstance had escaped him, namely, that no tools were used in its erection. Reginald retired for a few minutes to the corner of the room, and returned with the beautiful lines—

"No hammer fell, no ponderous axes rung,  
Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung.  
Majestic silence," &c.

After inspecting the University and Blenheim, under the guidance of the Hebers, Scott returned to London.

Messrs. Longman's new edition of the first two volumes of the *Minstrelsy* consisted of 1,000 copies; of volume third there were 1,500. A complete edition of 1,250 copies followed in 1806; a fourth also of 1,250

in 1810; a fifth of 1,500 in 1812; a sixth of 500 in 1820; and since then it has been incorporated in various successive editions of Scott's Collected Poetry—to the extent of at least 15,000 copies more. Of the Continental and American editions I can say nothing, except that they have been very numerous. The book was soon translated into German, Danish, and Swedish; and, the structure of those languages being very favourable to the undertaking, the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border has thus become widely naturalized among nations themselves rich in similar treasures of legendary lore. Of the extraordinary accuracy and felicity of the German version of Schubart, Scott has given some specimens in the last edition which he himself superintended—that of 1830.

He certainly had every reason to be contented with the impression which the Minstrelsy made on the minds of those entitled to think for themselves upon such a subject. The ancient ballads in his collection, which had never been printed at all before, were in number forty-three; and of the others—most of which were in fact all but new to the modern reader—it is little to say that his editions were superior in all respects to those that had preceded them. He had, I firmly believe, interpolated hardly a line or even an epithet of his own; but his diligent zeal had put him in possession of a variety of copies in different stages of preservation; and to the task of selecting a standard text among such a diversity of materials, he brought a knowledge of old manners and phraseology, and a manly simplicity of taste, such as had never before been united in the person of a poetical antiquary. From among a hundred corruptions he seized, with instinctive tact, the primitive diction and imagery; and produced strains in which the unbroken energy of half-civilized ages, their stern and deep passions, their daring adventures and cruel tragedies, and even their rude wild humour, are reflected with almost the brightness of a Homeric mirror, interrupted by hardly a blot of what deserves to be called vulgarity, and totally free from any admixture of artificial sentimentalism. As a picture of manners, the Scottish Minstrelsy is not surpassed, if equalled, by any similar body of poetry preserved in any other country; and it unquestionably owes its superiority in this respect over Percy's *Reliques* to the editor's conscientious fidelity on the one hand, which prevented the introduction of anything new; to his pure taste on the other, in the balancing of discordant recitations. His introductory essays and notes teemed with curious knowledge, not hastily grasped for the occasion, but gradually gleaned and sifted by the patient labour of years, and presented with an easy, unaffected propriety and elegance of arrangement and expression, which it may be doubted if he ever materially surpassed in the happiest of his imaginative narrations. I well remember, when *Waverley* was a new book, and all the world were puzzling themselves about its authorship, to have heard the poet of the *Isle of Palms* exclaim impatiently, "I wonder what all these people are perplexing themselves with: have they forgotten the *prose* of the Minstrelsy?" Even had the editor inserted none of his own verse, the work would have contained enough, and more than enough, to found a lasting and graceful reputation.

It is not to be denied, however, that the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border has derived a very large accession of interest from the subsequent

career of its editor. One of the critics of that day said that the book contained "the elements of a hundred historical romances;"—and this critic was a prophetic one.

Shortly after the complete *Minstrelsy* issued from the press, Scott made his first appearance as a reviewer. The *Edinburgh Review* had been commenced in October, 1802, under the superintendence of the Rev. Sidney Smith, with whom, during his short residence in Scotland, he had lived on terms of great kindness and familiarity. Mr. Smith soon resigned the editorship to Mr. Jeffrey, who had by this time been for several years among the most valued of Scott's friends and companions at the bar; and, the new journal being far from committing itself to violent politics at the outset, he appreciated the brilliant talents regularly engaged in it far too highly not to be well pleased with the opportunity of occasionally exercising his pen in its service. His first contribution was, I believe, an article on Southey's *Amadis of Gaul*, included in the number for October, 1803. Another, on Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, appeared in the same number; a third, on *Godwin's Life of Chaucer*; a fourth, on *Ellis's Specimens of Ancient English Poetry*; and a fifth, on the *Life and Works of Chatterton*, followed in the course of 1804.

Both as quartermaster of the *Edinburgh Light Horse*, and as Sheriff of the Forest, he had a full share of responsibility in the warlike arrangements to which the authorities of Scotland had at length been roused; nor were the duties of his two offices considered as strictly compatible by Francis Lord Napier, then Lord-Lieutenant of Selkirkshire, for I find several letters in which his lordship complains that the incessant drills and musters of Musselburgh and Portobello prevented the Sheriff from attending county meetings held at Selkirk in the course of this summer and autumn, for the purpose of organizing the trained bands of the Forest on a scale hitherto unattempted. Lord Napier strongly urges the propriety of his resigning his connection with the *Edinburgh troop*, and fixing his summer residence somewhere within the limits of his proper jurisdiction; nay, he goes so far as to hint that if these suggestions should be neglected, it must be his duty to state the case to the Government. Scott could not be induced (least of all by a threat), while the fears of invasion still prevailed, to resign his place among his old companions of "the voluntary band;" but he seems to have presently acquiesced in the propriety of the Lord-Lieutenant's advice respecting a removal from Lasswade to Ettrick Forest.

It was in the September of 1803 that Scott first saw Wordsworth. Their mutual acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked of them to each other that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends.

Mr. and Miss Wordsworth had just completed that tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's *Diary*. On the morning of the 17th of September, having left their carriage at Rosslyn, they walked down the valley to Lasswade, and arrived there before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen. "We were received," Mr. Wordsworth has told me, "with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his

animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life ; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition ; the same unaffected modesty about himself ; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel ; and the novelty of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me.”

After this he walked with the tourists to Rosslyn, and promised to meet them in two days at Melrose. The night before they reached Melrose they slept at the little quiet inn of Clovenford, where, on mentioning his name, they were received with all sorts of attention and kindness, the landlady observing that Mr. Scott, “ who was a very clever gentleman,” was an old friend of the house, and usually spent a good deal of time there during the fishing season. “ But, indeed,” says Mr. Wordsworth, “ wherever we named him, we found the word acted as an *open sesame* ; and I believe that in the character of the *Sheriff*’s friends, we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the Border country.”

He met them at Melrose on the 19th, and escorted them through the Abbey, pointing out all its beauties, and pouring out his rich stores of history and tradition. They then dined, and spent the evening together at the inn ; but Miss Wordsworth observed that there was some difficulty about arranging matters for the night, “ the landlady refusing to settle anything until she had ascertained from the *Sheriff himself* that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with *William*.” Scott was thus far on his way to the Circuit Court at Jedburgh, in his capacity of Sheriff, and there his new friends again joined him ; but he begged that they would not enter the Court, “ for,” said he, “ I really would not like you to see the sort of figure I cut there.” They did see him casually, however, in his cocked hat and sword, marching in the judge’s procession to the sound of one cracked trumpet, and were then not surprised that he should have been a little ashamed of the whole ceremonial. He introduced to them his friend, William Laidlaw, who was attending the Court as a jurymen, and who, having read some of Wordsworth’s verses in a newspaper, was exceedingly anxious to be of the party, when they explored at leisure, all the law business being over, the beautiful valley of the Jed, and the ruins of the Castle of Fernieherst, the original fastness of the noble family of Lothian. The grove of stately ancient elms about and below the ruin was seen to great advantage in a fine, grey, breezy autumnal afternoon ; and Mr. Wordsworth happened to say, “ What life there is in trees ! ” — “ How different,” said Scott, “ was the feeling of a very intelligent young lady, born and bred in the Orkney Islands, who lately came to spend a season in this neighbourhood ! She told me nothing in the mainland scenery had so much disappointed her as woods and trees. She found them so dead and lifeless that she could never help pining after the eternal motion and variety of the ocean. And so back she has gone, and I believe nothing will ever tempt her from the *wind-swept Orcaes* again.”

Next day they all proceeded together up the Teviot to Hawick, Scott entertaining his friends with some legend or ballad connected with every tower or rock they passed. He made them stop for a little to admire par-

ticularly a scene of deep and solemn retirement, called *Horne's Pool*, from its having been the daily haunt of a contemplative schoolmaster, known to him in his youth; and at Kirkton he pointed out the little village schoolhouse, to which his friend Leyden had walked six or eight miles every day across the moors "when a poor barefooted boy." From Hawick, where they spent the night, he led them next morning to the brow of a hill, from which they could see a wide range of the Border mountains, Ruberslaw, the Carter, and the Cheviots, and lamented that neither their engagements nor his own would permit them to make, at this time, an excursion into the wilder glens of Liddisdale, "where," said he, "I have strolled so often and so long that I may say I have a home in every farmhouse." "And, indeed," adds Mr. Wordsworth, "wherever we went with him, he seemed to know everybody, and everybody to know and like him." Here they parted, the Wordsworths to pursue their journey homeward by Eskdale, he to return to Lasswade.

The impression on Mr. Wordsworth's mind was, that on the whole he attached much less importance to his literary labours or reputation than to his bodily sports, exercises, and social amusements; and yet he spoke of his profession as if he had already given up almost all hope of rising by it; and some allusion being made to its profits, observed that "he was sure he could, if he chose, get more money than he should ever wish to have from the booksellers."

This confidence in his own literary resources appeared to Mr. Wordsworth remarkable—the more so from the careless way in which its expression dropped from him. As to his despondence concerning the bar, I confess his *fee-book* indicates much less ground for such a feeling than I should have expected to discover there. His practice brought him, as we have seen, in the session of 1796-7, £144 10s.; its proceeds fell down, in the first year of his married life, to £79 17s.; but they rose again, in 1798-9, to £135 9s.; amounted in 1799-1800, to £129 13s.; in 1800-1, to £170; in 1801-2, to £202 12s.; and in the session that had just elapsed (which is the last included in the record before me), £228 18s.

I have already said something of the beginning of Scott's acquaintance with the Ettrick Shepherd. Shortly after their first meeting, Hogg, coming into Edinburgh with a flock of sheep, was seized with a sudden ambition of seeing himself in print, and he wrote out that same night Willie and Katie, and a few other ballads, already famous in the Forest, which some obscure bookseller gratified him by putting forth accordingly; but they appear to have attracted no notice beyond their original sphere. Hogg then made an excursion into the Highlands, in quest of employment as overseer of some extensive sheep-farm; but, though Scott had furnished him with strong recommendations to various friends, he returned without success. He printed an account of his travels, however, in a set of letters in the Scots Magazine, which, though exceedingly rugged and uncouth, had abundant traces of the native shrewdness and genuine poetical feeling of this remarkable man. These also failed to excite attention; but, undeterred by such disappointments, the Shepherd no sooner read the third volume of the Minstrelsy, than he made up his mind that the editor's Imitations of the Ancients were by no means what they should have been. "Immediately," he says, in one of his many

Memoirs of himself, "I chose a number of traditional facts, and set about imitating the manner of the Ancients myself." These imitations he transmitted to Scott, who warmly praised the many striking beauties scattered over their rough surface. The next time that Hogg's business carried him to Edinburgh, he waited upon Scott, who invited him to dinner in Castle Street, in company with William Laidlaw, who happened also to be in town, and some other admirers of the rustic genius. When Hogg entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Scott, being at the time in a delicate state of health, was reclining on a sofa. The Shepherd, after being presented, and making his best bow, forthwith took possession of another sofa placed opposite to hers, and stretched himself thereupon at all his length; for, as he said afterwards, "I thought I could never do wrong to copy the lady of the house." As his dress at this period was precisely that in which any ordinary herdsman attends cattle to the market, and as his hands, moreover, bore most legible marks of a recent sheep-smearing, the lady of the house did not observe with perfect equanimity the novel usage to which her chintz was exposed. The Shepherd, however, remarked nothing of all this—dined heartily and drank freely, and, by jest, anecdote, and song, afforded plentiful merriment to the more civilized part of the company. As the liquor operated, his familiarity increased and strengthened; from "Mr. Scott," he advanced to "Sherra," and thence to "Scott," "Walter," and "Wattie,"—until, at supper, he fairly convulsed the whole party by addressing Mrs. Scott as "Charlotte."

The collection entitled *The Mountain Bard* was eventually published by Constable, in consequence of Scott's recommendation, and this work did at last afford Hogg no slender share of the popular reputation for which he had so long thirsted.

Sir Tristrem was at length published on the 2nd of May, 1804, by Constable, who, however, expected so little popularity for the work that the edition consisted only of 150 copies. These were sold at a high price (two guineas), otherwise they would not have been enough to cover the expenses of paper and printing. Mr. Ellis, and Scott's other antiquarian friends, were much dissatisfied with these arrangements; but I doubt not that Constable was a better judge than any of them. The work, however, partook in due time of the favour attending its editor's name. In 1806, 750 copies were called for; and 1,000 in 1811. After that time Sir Tristrem was included in the collective editions of Scott's poetry; but he had never parted with the copyright, merely allowing his general publishers to insert it among his other works, whenever they chose to do so, as a matter of courtesy. It was not a performance from which he had ever anticipated any pecuniary profit, but it maintained at least, if it did not raise, his reputation in the circle of his fellow-antiquaries; and his own *Conclusion*, in the manner of the original romance, must always be admired as a remarkable specimen of skill and dexterity.

## CHAPTER VI.

ASHESTIEL—MUNGO PARK—PUBLICATION OF THE LAY OF THE LAST  
MINSTREL—PARTNERSHIP WITH BALLANTYNE—VISIT TO LONDON—  
APPOINTMENT AS CLERK OF SESSION.

It has been mentioned that in the course of the preceding summer the Lord-Lieutenant of Selkirkshire complained of Scott's military zeal as interfering sometimes with the discharge of his shrieval functions, and took occasion to remind him that the law, requiring every sheriff to reside at least four months in the year within his own jurisdiction, had not hitherto been complied with. It appears that Scott received this communication with some displeasure, being conscious that no duty of any importance had ever been neglected by him, well knowing that the law of residence was not enforced in the cases of many of his brother sheriffs, and, in fact, ascribing his Lord-Lieutenant's complaint to nothing but a certain nervous fidget as to all points of form, for which that respectable nobleman was notorious, as well became, perhaps, an old Lord of the Bedchamber, and High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Kirk. Scott, however, must have been found so clearly in the wrong, had the case been submitted to the Secretary of State, and Lord Napier conducted the correspondence with such courtesy, never failing to allege as a chief argument the pleasure which it would afford himself and the other gentlemen of Selkirkshire to have more of their Sheriff's society, that, while it would have been highly imprudent to persist, there could be no mortification in yielding. He flattered himself that his active habits would enable him to maintain his connection with the Edinburgh Cavalry as usual; and perhaps he also flattered himself that, residing for the summer in Selkirkshire would not interfere more seriously with his business as a barrister than the occupation of the cottage at Lasswade had hitherto done.

While he was seeking about, accordingly, for some "lodge in the Forest," his kinsman of Harden suggested that the tower of Auld Wat might be refitted, so as to serve his purpose; and he received the proposal with enthusiastic delight. On a more careful inspection of the localities, however, he became sensible that he would be practically at a greater distance from county business of all kinds at Harden, than if he were to continue at Lasswade. Just at this time the house of Ashestiel, situated on the southern bank of the Tweed, a few miles from Selkirk, became vacant by the death of its proprietor, Colonel Russell, who had married a sister of Scott's mother, and the consequent dispersion of the family. The young laird of Ashestiel, his cousin, was then in India; and the Sheriff took a lease of the house and grounds, with a small farm

adjoining. On the 4th May, two days after the *Tristrem* had been published, he says to Ellis: "I have been engaged in travelling backwards and forwards to Selkirkshire upon little pieces of business, just important enough to prevent my doing anything to purpose. One great matter, however, I have achieved, which is procuring myself a place of residence, which will save me these teasing migrations in future; so that though I part with my sweet little cottage on the banks of the Esk, you will find me this summer in the very centre of the ancient Reged, in a decent farmhouse overhanging the Tweed, and situated in a wild pastoral country." And again on the 19th, he thus apologizes for not having answered a letter of the 10th: "For more than a month my head was fairly tenanted by ideas, which, though strictly pastoral and rural, were neither literary nor poetical. *Long sheep*, and *short sheep*, and *tups*, and *gimmers*, and *hogs*, and *dinmonts*, had made a perfect sheepfold of my understanding, which is hardly yet cleared of them. I hope Mrs. Ellis will clap a bridle on her imagination. Ettrick Forest boasts finely shaped hills and clear romantic streams; but, alas! they are bare to wildness, and denuded of the beautiful natural wood with which they were formerly shaded. It is mortifying to see that, though wherever the sheep are excluded, the copse has immediately sprung up in abundance, so that enclosures only are wanting to restore the wood wherever it might be useful or ornamental, yet hardly a proprietor has attempted to give it fair play for a resurrection. . . . You see we reckon positively on you, the more because our arch-critic Jeffrey tells me that he met you in London, and found you still inclined for a northern trip. All our wise men in the north are rejoiced at the prospect of seeing George Ellis. If you delay your journey till July, I shall then be free of the Courts of Law, and will meet you upon the Border, at whatever side you enter."

The business part of these letters refers to Scott's brother Daniel, who, as he expresses it, "having been bred to the mercantile line, had been obliged, by some untoward circumstances, particularly an imprudent connexion with an artful woman, to leave Edinburgh for Liverpool, and now to be casting his eyes towards Jamaica." Scott requests Ellis to help him if he can by introducing him to some of his own friends or agents in that island; and Ellis furnishes him accordingly with letters to Mr. Blackburne, a friend and brother proprietor, who appears to have paid Daniel Scott every possible attention, and soon provided him with suitable employment on a healthy part of his estates. But the same low tastes and habits which had reduced the unfortunate young man to the necessity of expatriating himself, recurred after a brief season of penitence and order, and continued until he had accumulated great affliction upon all his family.

On the 10th of June, 1804, died, at his seat of Rosebank, Captain Robert Scott, the affectionate uncle whose name has before occurred in this narrative. "He was," says his nephew to Ellis, on the 18th, "a man of universal benevolence, and great kindness towards his friends, and to me individually. His manners were so much tinged with the habits of celibacy as to render them peculiar, though by no means unpleasantly so, and his profession (that of a seaman) gave a high colouring to the whole. The loss is one which, though the course of nature led me to expect it, did not

take place at last without considerable pain to my feelings. The arrangement of his affairs, and the distribution of his small fortune among his relations, will devolve in a great measure upon me. He has distinguished me by leaving me a beautiful little villa on the banks of the Tweed, with every possible convenience annexed to it, and about thirty acres of the finest land in Scotland. Notwithstanding, however, the temptation that this bequest offers, I continue to pursue my Reged plan, and expect to be settled at Ashestiel in the course of a month. Rosebank is situated so near the village of Kelso as hardly to be sufficiently a country residence; besides, it is hemmed in by hedges and ditches, not to mention dukes and lady dowagers, which are bad things for little people. It is expected to sell to great advantage. I shall buy a mountain farm with the purchase-money, and be quite the Laird of the Cairn and the Scaur."

Scott sold Rosebank, in the course of the year, for £5,000; his share (being a ninth) of his uncle's other property amounted, I believe, to about £500; and he had beside a legacy of £100 in his quality of trustee. This bequest made an important change in his pecuniary position, and influenced accordingly the arrangements of his future life. Independently of practice at the bar and of literary profits he was now, with his little patrimony, his sheriffship, and about £200 per annum arising from the stock ultimately settled on his wife, in possession of a fixed revenue of nearly, if not quite, £1,000 a year.

On the 1st of August he writes to Ellis from Ashestiel: "Having had only about a hundred and fifty things to do, I have scarcely done anything, and yet could not give myself leave to suppose that I had leisure to write letters. 1st, I had this farmhouse to furnish from sales, from brokers' shops, and from all manner of hospitals for incurable furniture. 2dly, I had to let my cottage on the banks of the Esk. 3dly, I had to arrange matters for the sale of Rosebank. 4thly, I had to go into quarters with our cavalry, which made a very idle fortnight in the midst of all this business. Last of all, I had to superintend a removal, or what we call a *fitting*, which, of all bores under the cope of heaven, is bore the most tremendous. After all these storms we are now most comfortably settled, and have only to regret deeply our disappointment at finding your northern march blown up. We had been projecting about twenty expeditions, and were pleasing ourselves at Mrs. Ellis's expected surprise on finding herself so totally built in by mountains, as I am at the present writing hereof. We are seven miles from kirk and market. We rectify the last inconvenience by killing our own mutton and poultry; and as to the former, finding there was some chance of my family turning pagans, I have adopted the goodly practice of reading prayers every Sunday, to the great edification of my household. Think of this, you that have the happiness to be within two steps of the church, and commiserate those who dwell in the wilderness. I showed Charlotte yesterday the *Cutrail*, and told her that to inspect that venerable monument was one main object of your intended journey to Scotland. She is of opinion that ditches must be more scarce in the neighbourhood of Windsor Forest than she had hitherto had the least idea of."

Ashestiel will be visited by many for his sake, as long as Waverley and Marmion are remembered. A more beautiful situation for the resi-

dence of a poet could not be conceived. The house was then a small one, but, compared with the cottage at Lasswade, its accommodations were amply sufficient. You approached it through an old-fashioned garden, with holly hedges and broad green terrace walks. On one side, close under the windows, is a deep ravine, clothed with venerable trees, down which a mountain rivulet is heard, more than seen, in its progress to the Tweed. The river itself is separated from the high bank on which the house stands only by a narrow meadow of the richest verdure. Opposite, and all around, are the green hills. The valley there is narrow, and the aspect in every direction is that of perfect pastoral repose. The heights immediately behind are those which divide the Tweed from the Yarrow; and the latter celebrated stream lies within an easy ride, in the course of which the traveller passes through a variety of the finest mountain scenery in the south of Scotland. No town is within seven miles but Selkirk, which was then still smaller and quieter than it is now; there was hardly even a gentleman's family within visiting distance, except at Yair, a few miles lower on the Tweed, the ancient seat of the Pringles of Whytbank, and at Bowhill, between the Yarrow and the Ettrick, where the Earl of Dalkeith used occasionally to inhabit a small shooting lodge, which has since grown to be a magnificent ducal residence. The country all around, with here and there an insignificant exception, belongs to the Buccleuch estate, so that, whichever way he chose to turn, the bard of the clan had ample room and verge enough, and all appliances to boot, for every variety of field sport that might happen to please his fancy; and, being then in the prime vigour of manhood, he was not slow to profit by these advantages. Meantime, the concerns of his own little farm, and the care of his absent relation's woods, gave him healthful occupation in the intervals of the chase; and he had long solitary evenings for the uninterrupted exercise of his pen—perhaps, on the whole, better opportunities of study than he had ever enjoyed before, or was to meet with elsewhere in later days.

When he first examined Ashestiel, with a view to being his cousin's tenant, he thought of taking home James Hogg to superintend the sheep-farm, and keep watch over the house also during the winter. I am not able to tell exactly in what manner this proposal fell to the ground.

Scott had hardly been a week in possession of his new domains before he made acquaintance with a character much better suited to his purpose than James Hogg ever could have been. I mean honest Thomas Purdie, his faithful servant—his affectionately devoted humble friend from this time until death parted them. Tom was first brought before him, in his capacity of Sheriff, on a charge of poaching, when the poor fellow gave such a touching account of his circumstances,—a wife, and I know not how many children depending on his exertions—work scarce and grouse abundant,—and all this with a mixture of odd sly humour,—that the Sheriff's heart was moved. Tom escaped the penalty of the law—was taken into employment as shepherd, and showed such zeal, activity, and shrewdness in that capacity, that Scott never had any occasion to repent of the step he soon afterwards took, in promoting him to the position which had been originally offered to James Hogg.

It was also about the same time that he took into his service as coachman Peter Mathieson, brother-in-law to Thomas Purdie, another faithful

servant, who never afterwards left him, and still survives his kind master. Scott's awkward conduct of the little phaeton had exposed his wife to more than one perilous overturn, before he agreed to set up a close carriage, and call in the assistance of this steady charioteer.

During this autumn Scott formed the personal acquaintance of Mungo Park, the celebrated victim of African discovery. On his return from his first expedition, Park endeavoured to establish himself as a medical practitioner in the town of Hawick, but the drudgeries of that calling in such a district soon exhausted his ardent temper, and he was now living in seclusion in his native cottage at Fowlsheils on the Yarrow, nearly opposite Newark Castle. His brother, Archibald Park, a man remarkable for strength both of mind and body introduced the traveller to Scott. They soon became much attached to each other; and Scott supplied some interesting anecdotes of their brief intercourse to the late Mr. Wishaw, the editor of Park's posthumous Journal, with which I shall blend a few minor circumstances which I gathered from him in conversation long afterwards. "On one occasion," he says, "the traveller communicated to him some very remarkable adventures which had befallen him in Africa, but which he had not recorded in his book." On Scott's asking the cause of this silence, Mungo answered "that in all cases where he had information to communicate, which he thought of importance to the public, he had stated the facts boldly, leaving it to his readers to give such credit to his statements as they might appear justly to deserve; but that he would not shock their faith, or render his travels more marvellous, by introducing circumstances which, however true, were of little or no moment, as they related solely to his own personal adventures and escapes." This reply struck Scott as highly characteristic of the man; and though strongly tempted to set down some of these marvels for Mr. Wishaw's use, he on reflection abstained from doing so, holding it unfair to record what the adventurer had deliberately chosen to suppress in his own narrative. He confirms the account given by Park's biographer of his cold and reserved manners to strangers; and in particular, of his disgust of the *indirect* questions which curious visitors would often put to him upon the subject of his travels. "This practice," said Mungo, "exposes me to two risks; either that I may not understand the questions meant to be put, or that my answers to them may be misconstrued;" and he contrasted such conduct with the frankness of Scott's revered friend, Dr. Adam Ferguson, who, the very first day the traveller dined with him at Hallyards, spread a large map of Africa on the table, and made him trace out his progress thereupon, inch by inch, questioning him minutely as to every step he had taken. "Here, however," says Scott, "Dr. F. was using a privilege to which he was well entitled by his venerable age and high literary character, but which could not have been exercised with propriety by any common stranger."

Calling one day at Fowlsheils, and not finding Park at home, Scott walked in search of him along the banks of the Yarrow, which in that neighbourhood passes over various ledges of rock, forming deep pools and eddies between them. Presently he discovered his friend standing alone on the bank, plunging one stone after another into the water, and watching anxiously the bubbles as they rose to the surface. "This," said Scott,

"appears but an idle amusement for one who has seen so much stirring adventure." "Not so idle, perhaps, as you suppose," answered Mungo. "This was the manner in which I used to ascertain the depth of a river in Africa before I ventured to cross it—judging whether the attempt would be safe, by the time the bubbles of air took to ascend." At this time Park's intention of a second expedition had never been revealed to Scott; but he instantly formed the opinion that these experiments on Yarrow were connected with some such purpose.

His thoughts had always continued to be haunted with Africa. He told Scott that whenever he awoke suddenly in the night, owing to a nervous disorder with which he was troubled, he fancied himself still a prisoner in the tent of Ali; but when the poet expressed some surprise that he should design again to revisit those scenes, he answered, that he would rather brave Africa and all its horrors than wear out his life in long and toilsome rides over the hills of Scotland, for which the remuneration was hardly enough to keep soul and body together.

Towards the end of the autumn, when about to quit his country for the last time, Park paid Scott a farewell visit, and slept at Ashestiel. Next morning his host accompanied him homewards over the wild chain of hills between the Tweed and the Yarrow. Park talked much of his new scheme, and mentioned his determination to tell his family that he had some business for a day or two in Edinburgh, and send them his blessing from thence without returning to take leave. He had married, not long before, a pretty and amiable woman; and when they reached the *Williamhope Ridge*, "the autumnal mist floating heavily and slowly down the valley of the Yarrow," presented to Scott's imagination "a striking emblem of the troubled and uncertain prospect which his undertaking afforded." He remained, however, unshaken, and at length they reached the spot at which they had agreed to separate. A small ditch divided the moor from the road, and, in going over it, Park's horse stumbled, and nearly fell. "I am afraid, Mungo," said the Sheriff, "that is a bad omen." To which he answered, smiling, "*Freits* (omens) follow those who look to them." With this expression Mungo struck the spurs into his horse, and Scott never saw him again. His parting proverb, by the way, was probably suggested by one of the Border ballads, in which species of lore he was almost as great a proficient as the Sheriff himself; for we read in *Edom o' Gordon*,—

"Them look to freits, my master dear,  
Then freits will follow them."

I must not omit that George Scott, the unfortunate companion of Park's second journey, was the son of a tenant on the Buccleuch estate, whose skill in drawing having casually attracted the Sheriff's attention, he was recommended by him to the protection of the family, and by this means established in a respectable situation in the Ordnance department of the Tower of London; but the stories of his old acquaintance Mungo Park's discoveries had made such an impression on his fancy, that nothing could prevent his accompanying him on the fatal expedition of 1805.

The brother of Mungo Park remained in Scott's neighbourhood for many years, and was frequently his companion in his mountain rides. Though

a man of the most dauntless temperament, he was often alarmed at Scott's reckless horsemanship. "The de'il's in ye, Sherra," he would say, "ye'll never halt till they bring you hame with your feet foremost." He rose greatly in favour in consequence of the gallantry with which he seized a gipsy, accused of murder, from amidst a group of similar desperadoes, on whom the Sheriff and he had come unexpectedly in a desolate part of the country.

To return to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*:—Ellis, understanding it to be now nearly ready for the press, writes to Scott, urging him to set it forth with some engraved illustrations—if possible, after Flaxman, whose splendid designs from Homer had shortly before made their appearance. He answers, August 21—"I should have liked very much to have had appropriate embellishments. Indeed, we made some attempts of the kind, but they did not succeed. I should fear Flaxman's genius is too classic to stoop to body forth my Gothic Borderers. Would there not be some risk of their resembling the antique of Homer's heroes rather than the iron race of Salvator? After all, perhaps nothing is more difficult than for a painter to adopt the author's ideas of an imaginary character, especially when it is founded on traditions to which the artist is a stranger. I should like at least to be at his elbow when at work. I wish very much I could have sent you the *Lay* while in MS., to have had the advantage of your opinion and corrections. But Ballantyne galled my kibes so severely during an unusual fit of activity, that I gave him the whole story in a sort of pet both with him and with it."

There is a circumstance which must already have struck such of my readers as knew the author in his latter days, namely, the readiness with which he seems to have communicated this poem, in its progress, not only to his own familiar friends, but to new and casual acquaintances. We shall find him following the same course with his *Marmion*—but not, I think, with any of his subsequent works. His determination to consult the movements of his own mind alone in the conduct of his pieces was probably taken before he began the *Lay*; and he soon resolved to trust for the detection of minor inaccuracies to two persons only—James Ballantyne and William Erskine. The printer was himself a man of considerable literary talents; his own style had the incurable faults of pomposity and affectation, but his eye for more venial errors in the writings of others was quick, and, though his personal address was apt to give a stranger the impression of insincerity, he was in reality an honest man, and conveyed his mind on such matters with equal candour and delicacy during the whole of Scott's brilliant career. In the vast majority of instances he found his friend acquiesce at once in the propriety of his suggestions; nay, there certainly were cases, though rare, in which his advice to alter things of much more consequence than a word or a rhyme was frankly tendered, and on deliberation adopted by Scott. Mr. Erskine was the referee whenever the poet hesitated about taking the hints of the zealous typographer, and his refined taste and gentle manners rendered his critical alliance highly valuable. With two such faithful friends within his reach, the author of the *Lay* might safely dispense with sending his MS. to be revised even by George Ellis.

In the first week of January, 1805, the *Lay* was published; and its

success at once decided that literature should form the main business of Scott's life.

It is curious to trace the small beginnings and gradual development of his design. The lovely Countess of Dalkeith hears a wild rude legend of Border *diablerie*, and sportively asks him to make it the subject of a ballad. He had been already labouring in the elucidation of the "quaint Inglis," ascribed to an ancient seer and bard of the same district, and perhaps completed his own sequel, intending the whole to be included in the third volume of the *Minstrelsy*. He assents to Lady Dalkeith's request, and casts about for some new variety of diction and rhyme, which might be adopted without impropriety in a closing strain for the same collection. Sir John Stoddart's casual recitation, a year or two before, of Coleridge's unpublished *Christabel*, had fixed the music of that noble fragment in his memory; and it occurs to him, that by throwing the story of Gilpin Horner into somewhat of a similar cadence, he might produce such an echo of the later metrical romance as would serve to connect his *Conclusion* of the primitive Sir Tristrem with his imitations of the common popular ballad in the Grey Brother and Eve of St. John. A single scene of feudal festivity in the hall of Branksome, disturbed by some pranks of a nondescript goblin, was probably all that he contemplated; but his accidental confinement in the midst of a volunteer camp gave him leisure to meditate his theme to the sound of the bugle; and suddenly there flashes on him the idea of extending his simple outline, so as to embrace a vivid panorama of that old Border life of war and tumult, and all earnest passions, with which his researches on the *Minstrelsy* had by degrees fed his imagination, until every the minutest feature had been taken home and realized with unconscious intenseness of sympathy; so that he had won for himself in the past another world, hardly less complete or familiar than the present. Erskine or Cranstoun suggests that he would do well to divide the poem into cantos, and prefix to each of them a motto explanatory of the action, after the fashion of Spenser in the *Faery Queen*. He pauses for a moment—and the happiest conception of the framework of a picturesque narrative that ever occurred to any poet—one that Homer might have envied—the creation of the ancient harper starts to life. By such steps did the Lay of the Last Minstrel grow out of the *Minstrelsy* of the Scottish Border.

A word more of its felicitous machinery. It was at Bowhill that the Countess of Dalkeith requested a ballad on Gilpin Horner. The ruined castle of Newark closely adjoins that seat, and is now indeed included within its *pleasance*. Newark had been the chosen residence of the first Duchess of Buccleuch, and he accordingly shadows out his own beautiful friend in the person of her lord's ancestress, the last of the original stock of that great house; himself the favoured inmate of Bowhill, introduced certainly to the familiarity of its circle in consequence of his devotion to the poetry of a bypast age, in that of an aged minstrel, "the last of the race," seeking shelter at the gate of Newark, in days when many an adherent of the fallen cause of Stuart—his own bearded ancestor, *who had fought at Killiecrankie*, among the rest—owed their safety to her who

"In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,  
Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb,"

The arch allusions which run through all these *Introductions*, without in the least interrupting the truth and graceful pathos of their main impression, seem to me exquisitely characteristic of Scott, whose delight and pride was to play with the genius which nevertheless mastered him at will. For, in truth, what is it that gives to all his works their unique and marking charm, except the matchless effect which sudden effusions of the purest heart-blood of nature derive from their being poured out, to all appearance involuntarily, amidst diction and sentiment cast equally in the mould of the busy world, and the seemingly habitual desire to dwell on nothing but what might be likely to excite curiosity without too much disturbing deeper feelings in the saloons of polished life? Such outbursts come forth dramatically in all his writings; but in the interludes and passionate parentheses of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, we have the poet's own inner soul and temperament laid bare and throbbing before us: even here, indeed, he has a mask, and he trusts it.—but fortunately it is a transparent one.

Many minor personal allusions have been explained in the notes to the last edition of the *Lay*. It was hardly necessary even then to say that the choice of the hero had been dictated by the poet's affection for the living descendants of the Baron of Cranstoun; and now none who have perused the preceding pages can doubt that he had dressed out his Margaret of Branksome in the form and features of his own first love. This poem may be considered as the "bright consummate flower" in which all the dearest dreams of his youthful fancy had at length found expansion for their strength, spirit, tenderness, and beauty.

He has embodied what was, at the time when he penned them, the chief daydream of Ashestiel. From the moment that his uncle's death placed a considerable sum of ready money at his command, he pleased himself, as we have seen, with the idea of buying a mountain farm, and becoming not only the "sheriff" (as he had in former days delighted to call himself), but "the laird of the cairn and the scour." While he was "labouring *doucement* at the *Lay*" (as in one of his letters he expresses it), during the recess of 1804, circumstances rendered it next to certain that the small estate of *Broadmeadows*, situated just over against the ruins of Newark, on the northern bank of the Yarrow, would soon be exposed to sale; and many a time did he ride round it in company with Lord and Lady Dalkeith,

"When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,"

surveying the beautiful little domain with wistful eyes.

I consider it as, in one point of view, the greatest misfortune of his life that this vision was not realized; but the success of the poem itself changed "the spirit of his dream." The favour which it at once attained had not been equalled in the case of any one poem of considerable length during at least two generations: it certainly had not been approached in the case of any narrative poem since the days of Dryden. Before it was sent to the press it had received warm commendation from the ablest and most influential critic of the time; but when Mr. Jeffrey's review appeared, a month after publication, laudatory as its language was, it scarcely came up to the opinion which had already taken root in the public mind.

I abstain from transcribing the letters which conveyed to Scott the

private opinions of persons themselves eminently distinguished in poetry, but I think it just to state that I have not discovered in any of them—no, not even in those of Wordsworth or Campbell—a strain of approbation higher on the whole than that of the chief professional reviewer of the period.

"It would be great affectation," says the Introduction of 1830, "not to own that the author expected some success from the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. The attempt to return to a more simple and natural style of poetry was likely to be welcomed, at a time when the public had become tired of heroic hexameters, with all the buckram and binding that belong to them in modern days. But whatever might have been his expectations, whether moderate or unreasonable, the result left them far behind, for among those who smiled on the adventurous minstrel were numbered the great names of William Pitt and Charles Fox. Neither was the extent of the sale inferior to the character of the judges, who received the poem with approbation. Upwards of 30,000 copies were disposed of by the trade; and the author had to perform a task difficult to human vanity, when called upon to make the necessary deductions from his own merits, in a calm attempt to account for its popularity."

Through what channel or in what terms Fox made known his opinion of the *Lay*, I have failed to ascertain. Pitt's praise, as expressed to his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, within a few weeks after the poem appeared, was repeated by her to Mr. William Stewart Rose, who, of course, communicated it forthwith to the author; and, not long after, the Minister, in conversation with Scott's early friend, the Right Hon. William Dundas, signified that it would give him pleasure to find some opportunity of advancing the fortunes of such a writer. "I remember," writes this gentleman, "at Mr. Pitt's table in 1805, the Chancellor asked me about you and your then situation, and after I had answered him, Mr. Pitt observed, 'He can't remain as he is,' and desired me to 'look to it.' He then repeated some lines from the *Lay* describing the old harper's embarrassment when asked to play, and said, 'This is a sort of thing which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry.'"

It is agreeable to know that this great statesman and accomplished scholar awoke at least once from his supposed apathy as to the elegant literature of his own time.

The poet has under-estimated even the patent and tangible evidence of his success. The first edition of the *Lay* was a magnificent quarto, 750 copies; but this was soon exhausted, and there followed an octavo impression of 1,500; in 1806 two more, one of 2,000 copies, another of 2,250; in 1807, a fifth edition of 2,000, and a sixth of 3,000; in 1808, 3,550; in 1809, 3,000—a small edition in quarto (the ballads and lyrical pieces being then annexed to it),—and another octavo edition of 3,250; in 1811, 3,000; in 1812, 3,000; in 1816, 3,000; in 1823, 1,000. A fourteenth impression of 2,000 foolscap appeared in 1825; and besides all this, before the end of 1836, 11,000 copies had gone forth in the collected editions of his poetical works. Thus, nearly forty-thousand copies had been disposed of in this country, and by the legitimate trade alone, before he superintended the edition of 1830, to which his Biographical

Introductions' were prefixed. In the history of British Poetry nothing had ever equalled the demand for the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The publishers of the first edition were Longman and Co., of London, and Archibald Constable and Co., of Edinburgh; which last house, however, had but a small share in the adventure. The profits were to be divided equally between the author and his publishers; and Scott's moiety was £169 6s. Messrs. Longman, when a second edition was called for, offered £500 for the copyright; this was accepted, but they afterwards, as the Introduction says, "added £100 in their own unsolicited kindness. It was handsomely given to supply the loss of a fine horse which broke down suddenly while the author was riding with one of the worthy publishers." This worthy publisher was Mr. Owen Rees, and the gallant steed, to whom a desperate leap in the coursing-field proved fatal, was, I believe, *Captain*, the immediate successor of *Lenore* as Scott's charger in the volunteer cavalry; *Captain* was replaced by *Lieutenant*. The author's whole share, then, in the profits of the *Lay*, came to £769 6s.

Mr. Rees' visit to Ashiestiel occurred in the autumn. The success of the poem had already been decisive; and fresh negotiations of more kinds than one were at this time in progress between Scott and various booksellers' houses both of Edinburgh and London.

Mr. Ballantyne, in his Memorandum, says that very shortly after the publication of the *Lay*, he found himself obliged to apply to Mr. Scott for an advance of money, his own capital being inadequate for the business which had been accumulated on his press, in consequence of the reputation it had acquired for beauty and correctness of execution. Already, as we have seen, Ballantyne had received "a liberal loan;" "and now," says he, "being compelled, maugre all delicacy, to renew my application, he candidly answered that he was not quite sure that it would be prudent for him to comply, but in order to evince his entire confidence in me, he was willing to make a suitable advance to be admitted as a third-sharer of my business." In truth, Scott now embarked in Ballantyne's concern almost the whole of the capital at his disposal, namely, the £5,000 which he had received for Rosebank, and which he had a few months before designed to invest in the purchase of Broadmeadows. *Dis aliter visum*.

His Introduction to the *Lay* in 1830 appears to leave little doubt that the hope of ultimately succeeding at the bar had waxed very faint, before the third volume of the *Minstrelsy* was brought out in 1803. When that hope ultimately vanished altogether, perhaps he himself would not have found it easy to tell. The most important of men's opinions, views, and projects are sometimes taken up in so very gradual a manner, and after so many pauses of hesitation and of inward retraction, that they themselves are at a loss to trace in retrospect all the stages through which their minds have passed. We see plainly that Scott had never been fond of his profession, but that, conscious of his own persevering diligence, he ascribed his scanty success in it mainly to the prejudices of the Scotch solicitors against employing, in weighty causes at least, any barrister supposed to be strongly imbued with the love of literature; instancing the career of his friend Jeffrey as almost the solitary instance within his experience of such prejudices being entirely overcome. Had Scott, to his

strong sense and dexterous ingenuity, his well-grounded knowledge of the jurisprudence of his country, and his admirable industry, added a brisk and ready talent for debate and declamation, I can have no doubt that his triumph over the prejudices alluded to would have been as complete as Mr. Jeffrey's; nor in truth do I much question that, had one really great and interesting case been submitted to his sole care and management, the result would have been to place his professional character for skill and judgment, and variety of resource, on so firm a basis, that even his rising celebrity as a man of letters could not have seriously disturbed it. Nay, I think it quite possible that had he been entrusted with one such case after his reputation was established, and he had been compelled to do his abilities some measure of justice in his own secret estimate, he might have displayed very considerable powers even as a forensic speaker. But no opportunities of this engaging kind having ever been presented to him—after he had persisted for more than ten years in sweeping the floor of the Parliament House, without meeting with any employment but what would have suited the dullest drudge, and seen himself termly and yearly more and more distanced by contemporaries for whose general capacity he could have had little respect—while, at the same time, he already felt his own position in the eyes of society at large to have been signally elevated in consequence of his extra-professional exertions—it is not wonderful that disgust should have gradually gained upon him, and that the sudden blaze and tumult of renown which surrounded the author of the *Lay* should have at last determined him to concentrate all his ambition on the pursuits which had alone brought him distinction. It ought to be mentioned that the business in George's Square, once extensive and lucrative, had dwindled away in the hands of his brother Thomas, whose varied and powerful talents were unfortunately combined with some tastes by no means favourable to the successful prosecution of his prudent father's vocation; so that very possibly even the humble employment of which, during his first years at the bar, Scott had at least a sure and respectable allowance, was by this time much reduced. I have not his fee-books of later date than 1803; it is, however, my impression from the whole tenour of his conversation and correspondence, that after that period he had not only not advanced as a professional man, but had been retrograding in nearly the same proportion that his literary reputation advanced.

We have seen that, before he formed his contract with Ballantyne, he was in possession of such a fixed income as might have satisfied all his desires, had he not found his family increasing rapidly about him. Even as that was, with nearly, if not quite, £1,000 per annum, he might perhaps have retired not only from the bar, but from Edinburgh, and settled entirely at Ashestiel or Broadmeadows, without encountering what any man of his station and habits ought to have considered as an imprudent risk. He had, however, no wish to cut himself off from the busy and intelligent society to which he had been hitherto accustomed, and resolved not to leave the bar until he should have at least used his best efforts for obtaining, in addition to his shrievalty, one of those clerkships of the Supreme Court at Edinburgh, which are usually considered as honourable retirements for advocates who, at a certain standing, finally give up all

hopes of reaching the dignity of the bench. "I determined," he says, "that literature should be my staff but not my crutch, and that the profits of my literary labour, however convenient otherwise, should not, if I could help it, become necessary to my ordinary expenses. Upon such a post an author might hope to retreat, without any perceptible alteration of circumstances, whenever the time should arrive that the public grew weary of his endeavours to please, or he himself should tire of the pen. I possessed so many friends capable of assisting me in this object of ambition that I could hardly over-rate my own prospects of obtaining the preferment to which I limited my wishes; and, in fact, I obtained, in no long period, the reversion of a situation which completely met them."\*

The first notice of this affair that occurs in his correspondence is in a note of Lord Dalkeith's, Feb. 2nd, 1805, in which his noble friend says, "My father desires me to tell you that he has had a communication with Lord Melville within these few days, and that he thinks *your business is in a good train, though not certain.*" I consider it as clear, then, that he began his negotiations concerning a seat at the clerk's table immediately after the Lay was published, and that their commencement had been resolved upon in the strictest connection with his embarkation in the printing concern of James Ballantyne and Company. Such matters are seldom speedily arranged, but we shall find him in possession of his object before twelve months had elapsed.

Meanwhile, his design of quitting the bar was divulged to none but those immediately necessary for the purposes of his negotiation with the Government; and the nature of his connection with the printing company remained, I believe, not only unknown, but for some years wholly unsuspected, by any of his daily companions except Mr. Erskine.

The forming of this commercial connection was one of the most important steps in Scott's life. He continued bound by it during twenty years, and its influence on his literary exertions and his worldly fortunes was productive of much good and not a little evil. Its effects were in truth so mixed and balanced during the vicissitudes of a long and vigorous career, that I at this moment doubt whether it ought, on the whole, to be considered with more of satisfaction or of regret.

With what zeal he proceeded in advancing the views of the new co-partnership, his correspondence bears ample evidence. The brilliant and captivating genius, now acknowledged universally, was soon discovered by the leading booksellers of the time to be united with such abundance of matured information in many departments, and, above all, with such indefatigable habits, as to mark him out for the most valuable workman they could engage for the furtherance of their schemes. He had, long before this, cast a shrewd and penetrating eye over the field of literary enterprise, and developed in his own mind the outlines of many extensive plans, which wanted nothing but the command of a sufficient body of able subalterns to be carried into execution with splendid success. Such of these as he grappled with in his own person were, with rare exceptions, carried to a triumphant conclusion; but the alliance with Ballantyne soon infected him with the proverbial rashness of mere mercantile

\* Introduction to the Lay of the Last Minstrel, 1830.

adventure—while, at the same time, his generous feelings for other men of letters, and his characteristic propensity to over-rate their talents, combined to hurry him and his friends into a multitude of arrangements, the results of which were often extremely embarrassing, and ultimately, in the aggregate, all but disastrous. It is an old saying, that wherever there is a secret there must be something wrong; and dearly did he pay the penalty for the mystery in which he had chosen to involve this transaction. It was his rule, from the beginning, that whatever he wrote or edited must be printed at that press; and had he catered for it only as author and sole editor, all had been well; but had the booksellers known his direct pecuniary interest in keeping up and extending the occupation of those types, they would have taken into account his lively imagination and sanguine temperament, as well as his taste and judgment, and considered, far more deliberately than they too often did, his multifarious recommendations of new literary schemes, coupled though these were with some dim understanding that, if the Ballantyne press were employed, his own literary skill would be at his friend's disposal for the general superintendence of the undertaking. On the other hand, Scott's suggestions were, in many cases, perhaps in the majority of them, conveyed through Ballantyne, whose habitual deference to his opinion induced him to advocate them with enthusiastic zeal; and the printer, who had thus pledged his personal authority for the merits of the proposed scheme, must have felt himself committed to the bookseller, and could hardly refuse with decency to take a certain share of the pecuniary risk, by allowing the time and method of his own payment to be regulated according to the employer's convenience. Hence, by degrees, was woven a web of entanglement from which neither Ballantyne nor his adviser had any means of escape, except only in that indomitable spirit, the mainspring of personal industry altogether unparalleled, to which, thus set in motion, the world owes its most gigantic monument of literary genius.

The following is the first letter I have found of Scott to his PARTNER. The Mr. Foster mentioned in the beginning of it was a literary gentleman who had proposed to take on himself a considerable share in the annotation of some of the new *editions* then on the carpet—among others, one of Dryden.

“Ashestiel, April 12th, 1805.

“DEAR BALLANTYNE,—

“I have duly received your two favours—also Foster's. He still howls about the expense of printing, but I think we shall finally settle. His argument is that you print too fine, *alias* too dear. I intend to stick to my answer, that I know nothing of the matter, but that, settle it how you and he will, it must be printed by you, or can be no concern of mine. This gives you an advantage in driving the bargain. As to everything else, I think we shall do, and I will endeavour to set a few volumes a-going on the plan you propose.

“I have imagined a very superb work. What think you of a complete edition of British Poets, ancient and modern? Johnson's is imperfect and out of print; so is Bell's, which is a Lilliputian thing; and Anderson's, the most complete in point of number, is most contemptible in execution

both of the editor and printer. There is a scheme for you ! At least a hundred volumes, to be published at the rate of ten a year. I cannot, however, be ready till midsummer. If the booksellers will give me a decent allowance per volume, say thirty guineas, I shall hold myself well paid on the *writing* hand. This is a dead secret."

Scott opened forthwith his gigantic scheme of the British Poets to Constable, who entered into it with eagerness. They found presently that Messrs. Cadell and Davies, and some of the other London publishers, had a similar plan on foot, and after an unsuccessful negotiation with Mackintosh, were now actually treating with Campbell for the Biographical Prefaces. Scott proposed that the Edinburgh and London houses should join in the adventure, and that the editorial task should be shared between himself and his brother poet. To this both Messrs. Cadell and Mr. Campbell warmly assented ; but the design ultimately fell to the ground in consequence of the booksellers refusing to admit certain works which both Scott and Campbell insisted upon.

Precisely at the time when Scott's poetical ambition had been stimulated by the first outburst of universal applause, and when he was forming those engagements with Ballantyne which involved so large an accession of literary labours, as well as of pecuniary cares and responsibilities, a fresh impetus was given to the volunteer mania in Scotland by the appointment of the late Earl of Moira (afterwards Marquis of Hastings) to the chief military command in that part of the empire. The Earl had married, the year before, a Scottish peeress, the Countess of Loudon, and entered with great zeal into her sympathy with the patriotic enthusiasm of her countrymen. Edinburgh was converted into a camp ; independently of a large garrison of regular troops, nearly 10,000 fencibles and volunteers were almost constantly under arms. The lawyer wore his uniform under his gown ; the shopkeeper measured out his wares in scarlet—in short, the citizens of all classes made more use for several months of the military than of any other dress ; and the new Commander-in-Chief consulted equally his own gratification and theirs, by devising a succession of manœuvres which presented a vivid image of the art of war conducted on a large and scientific scale. In the *sham battles and sham sieges* of 1805, Craigmillar, Preston, Gilmerton, the Crosscauseway, and other formidable positions in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, were the scenes of many a dashing assault and resolute defence ; and occasionally the spirits of the mock combatants—English and Scotch, or Lowland and Highland—became so much excited that there was some difficulty in preventing the rough mockery of warfare from passing into its realities. The Highlanders, in particular, were very hard to be dealt with ; and once, at least, Lord Moira was forced to alter at the eleventh hour his programme of battle, because a battalion of kilted fencibles could not or would not understand that it was their duty to be beat. Such days as these must have been more nobly spirit-stirring than even the best specimens of the fox-chase. To the end of his life Scott delighted to recall the details of their countermarches, ambuscades, charges, and pursuits, and in all of these his associates of the Light Horse agree that none figured more advantageously than himself. Yet these military

interludes seem only to have whetted his appetite for closet work. Indeed, nothing but a complete publication of his letters could give an adequate notion of the facility with which he already combined the conscientious magistrate, the martinet quartermaster, the speculative printer, and the ardent lover of literature for its own sake.

The printing-office in the Canongate was by this time in very great request; and the partners had already found it necessary to borrow fresh capital—on the personal security, it need not be added, of Scott himself. He says: "As I have full confidence in applying the accommodation received from Sir William Forbes in the most convenient and prudent manner, I have no hesitation to return the bonds subscribed, as you desire. This will put you in cash for great matters."

Already he was seriously at work on Dryden. During the same summer, he drew up for the Edinburgh Review an admirable article on Todd's edition of Spenser; another on Godwin's Fleetwood; a third, on the Highland Society's Report concerning the Poems of Ossian; a fourth, on Johnes's Translation of Froissart; a fifth, on Colonel Thornton's Sporting Tour; and a sixth, on some cookery books—the two last being excellent specimens of his humour. He had, besides, a constant succession of minor cares in the superintendence of multifarious works passing through the Ballantyne press. But there is yet another important item to be included in the list of his literary labours of this period. The General Preface to his novels informs us, that "about 1805" he wrote the opening chapters of *Waverley*; and the second title, *'Tis Sixty Years since*, selected, as he says, "that the actual date of publication might correspond with the period in which the scene was laid," leaves no doubt that he had begun the work so early in 1805 as to contemplate publishing it before Christmas.

"Having proceeded," he says, "as far as, I think, the seventh chapter, I showed my work to a critical friend, whose opinion was unfavourable, and having then some poetical reputation, I was unwilling to risk the loss of it by attempting a new style of composition. I, therefore, then threw aside the work I had commenced, without either reluctance or remonstrance. I ought to add, that though my ingenuous friend's sentence was afterwards reversed, on an appeal to the public, it cannot be considered as any imputation on his good taste; for the specimen subjected to his criticism did not extend beyond the departure of the hero for Scotland, and consequently had not entered upon the part of the story which was finally found most interesting." A letter to be quoted under the year 1810 will, I believe, satisfy the reader that the first critic of the opening chapters of *Waverley* was William Erskine.

His correspondence shows how largely he was exerting himself all this while in the service of authors less fortunate than himself. James Hogg, among others, continued to occupy from time to time his attention; and he assisted regularly and assiduously throughout this and the succeeding year Mr. Robert Jameson, an industrious and intelligent antiquary, who had engaged in editing a collection of ancient popular ballads before the third volume of the *Minstrelsy* appeared, and who at length published his very curious work in 1807. Meantime, Ashestiel, in place of being less resorted to by literary strangers than Lasswade Cottage had been,

shared abundantly in the fresh attractions of the Lay, and booksellers in the plural number were preceded and followed by an endless variety of enthusiastic "gent'l bachelors," whose main temptation from the south had been the hope of seeing the Borders in company with their Minstrel. He still writes of himself as "idling away his hours;" he had already learned to appear as if he were doing so to all who had no particular right to confidence respecting the details of his privacy.

But the most agreeable of all his visitants were his own old familiar friends, and one of these has furnished me with a sketch of the autumn life of Ashestiel, of which I shall now avail myself. Scott's invitation was in these terms :—

*To James Skene, Esq., of Rubislaw.*

"Ashestiel, 18th August, 1805.

"DEAR SKENE,—

"I have prepared another edition of the Lay, 1,500 strong, moved thereunto by the faith, hope, and charity of the London booksellers. . . . If you could, in the interim, find a moment to spend here, you know the way, and the ford is where it was ; which, by the way, is more than I expected after Saturday last, the most dreadful storm of thunder and lightning I ever witnessed. The lightning broke repeatedly in our immediate vicinity, *i.e.*, betwixt us and the Peel Wood. Charlotte resolved to die in bed like a good Christian. The servants said it was the preface to the end of the world, and I was the only person that maintained my character for stoicism, which I assure you had some merit, as I had no doubt that we were in real danger. It was accompanied with a flood so tremendous, that I would have given five pounds you had been here to make a sketch of it. The little Glenkinnon brook was impassable for all the next day, and indeed I have been obliged to send all hands to repair the ford, which was converted into a deep pool. Believe me ever yours affectionately,

"W. S."

Mr. Skene says, "I well remember the ravages of the storm and flood described in this letter. The ford of Ashestiel was never a good one, and for some time after this it remained not a little perilous. He was himself the first to attempt the passage on his favourite black horse *Captain*, who had scarcely entered the river when he plunged beyond his depth, and had to swim to the other side with his burden. It requires a good horseman to swim a deep and rapid stream, but he trusted to the vigour of his steady trooper, and in spite of his lameness kept his seat manfully. A cart bringing a new kitchen *range* (as I believe the grate for that service is technically called) was shortly after upset in this ugly ford. The horse and cart were with difficulty got out, but the grate remained for some time in the middle of the stream to do duty as a horse-trap, and furnish subject for many a good joke when Mrs. Scott happened to complain of the imperfection of her kitchen appointments."

Mr. Skene soon discovered an important change which had recently been made in his friend's distribution of his time. Previously it had been his custom, whenever professional business or social engagements occupied the middle part of his day, to seize some hours for study after

he was supposed to have retired to bed. His physician suggested that this was very likely to aggravate his nervous headaches, the only malady he was subject to in the prime of his manhood ; and, contemplating with steady eye a course not only of unremitting but of increasing industry, he resolved to reverse his plan, and carried his purpose into execution with unflinching energy. In short, he had now adopted the habits in which, with very slender variation, he ever after persevered when in the country. He rose by five o'clock, lit his own fire when the season required one, and shaved and dressed with great deliberation—for he was a very martinet as to all but the mere coxcombries of the toilet, not abhorring effeminate dandyism itself so cordially as the slightest approach to personal slovenliness, or even those “bedgown and slipper tricks,” as he called them, in which literary men are so apt to indulge. Arrayed in his shooting-jacket, or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner-time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus by the time the family assembled for breakfast between nine and ten, he had done enough (in his own language) “*to break the neck of the day's work.*” After breakfast a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, “his own man.” When the weather was bad he would labour incessantly all the morning ; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest ; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed over-night, he was ready to start on it by ten, his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness.

It was another rule that every letter he received should be answered that same day. Nothing else could have enabled him to keep abreast with the flood of communications that in the sequel put his good-nature to the severest test ; but already the demands on him in this way also were numerous, and he included attention to them among the necessary business which must be dispatched before he had a right to close his writing-box, or as he phrased it, “*to say out, damned spot, and be a gentleman.*” In turning over his enormous mass of correspondence, I have almost invariably found some indication that, when a letter had remained more than a day or two unanswered, it had been so because he found occasion for inquiry or deliberate consideration.

I ought not to omit that in those days Scott was far too zealous a dragoon not to take a principal share in the stable duty. Before beginning his desk-work in the morning, he uniformly visited his favourite steed, and neither *Captain* nor *Lieutenant*, nor the lieutenant's successor, *Brown Adam* (so called after one of the heroes of the Minstrelsy), liked to be fed except by him. The latter charger was indeed altogether intractable in other hands, though in his the most submissive of faithful allies. The moment he was bridled and saddled, it was the custom to open the stable door as a signal that his master expected him, when he immediately trotted to the side of the *leaping-on-stone*, of which Scott from his lameness found it convenient to make use, and stood there, silent and motion-

less as a rock, until he was fairly in his seat, after which he displayed his joy by neighing triumphantly through a brilliant succession of curvettings. Brown Adam never suffered himself to be backed but by his master. He broke, I believe, one groom's arm and another's leg in the rash attempt to tamper with his dignity.

Camp was at this time the constant parlour dog. He was very handsome, very intelligent, and naturally very fierce, but gentle as a lamb among the children. As for the more locomotive Douglas and Percy, he kept one window of his study open, whatever might be the state of the weather, that they might leap out and in as the fancy moved them. He always talked to Camp as if he understood what was said—and the animal certainly did understand not a little of it; in particular it seemed as if he perfectly comprehended on all occasions that his master considered him as a sensible and steady friend, the greyhounds as volatile young creatures whose freaks must be borne with.

"Every day," says Mr. Skene, "we had some hours of coursing with the greyhounds, or riding at random over the hills, or of spearing salmon in the Tweed by sunlight, which last sport, moreover, we often renewed at night by the help of torches. This amusement of *burning the water*, as it is called, was not without some hazard, for the large salmon generally lie in the pools, the depths of which it is not easy to estimate with precision by torchlight; so that not unfrequently, when the sportsman makes a determined thrust at a fish apparently within reach, his eye has grossly deceived him, and instead of the point of the weapon encountering the prey, he finds himself launched with corresponding vehemence heels over head into the pool, both spear and salmon gone, the torch thrown out by the concussion of the boat, and quenched in the stream, while the boat itself has of course receded to some distance. I remember the first time I accompanied our friend he went right over the gunwale in this manner, and had I not accidentally been close at his side, and made a successful grasp at the skirt of his jacket as he plunged overboard, he must at least have had an awkward dive for it. Such are the contingencies of *burning the water*. The pleasures consist in being penetrated with cold and wet, having your shins broken against the stones in the dark, and perhaps mastering one fish out of every twenty you take aim at."

In all these amusements, but particularly in the *burning of the water*, Scott's most regular companion at this time was John Lord Somerville, who united with many higher qualities a most enthusiastic love for such sports, and consummate address in the prosecution of them. This amiable nobleman then passed his autumns at his pretty seat of Allwyn, or the Pavilion, situated on the Tweed, some eight or nine miles below Ashestiel. They interchanged visits almost every week; and Scott did not fail to profit largely by his friend's matured and well-known skill in every department of the science of rural economy. He always talked of him, in particular, as his master in the art of planting.

The laird of Rubislaw seldom failed to spend a part of the summer and autumn at Ashestiel, as long as Scott remained there, and during these visits they often gave a wider scope to their expeditions. "Indeed," says Mr. Skene, "there are few scenes at all celebrated either in the history, tradition, or romance of the Border counties which we did not

explore together in the course of our rambles. We traversed the entire vales of the Yarrow and Ettrick, with all their sweet tributary glens, and never failed to find a hearty welcome from the farmers at whose houses we stopped either for dinner or for the night. He was their chief magistrate, extremely popular in that official capacity, and nothing could be more gratifying than the frank and hearty reception which everywhere greeted our arrival, however unexpected. The exhilarating air of the mountains, and the healthy exercise of the day, secured our relishing homely fare, and we found inexhaustible entertainment in the varied display of character which the affability of the *Sheriff* drew forth on all occasions in genuine breadth and purity. The beauty of the scenery gave full employment to my pencil, with the free and frequent exercise of which he never seemed to feel impatient. He was at all times ready and willing to alight when any object attracted my notice, and used to seat himself beside me on the brae to con over some ballad appropriate to the occasion, or narrate the tradition of the glen—sometimes, perhaps, to note a passing idea in his pocket-book ; but this was rare, for in general he relied with confidence on the great storehouse of his memory. And much amusement we had, as you may suppose, in talking over the different incidents, conversations, and traits of manners that had occurred at the last hospitable fireside where we had mingled with the natives. Thus the minutes glided away until my sketch was complete, and then we mounted again with fresh alacrity.

“These excursions derived an additional zest from the uncertainty that often attended the issue of our proceedings ; for, following the game started by the dogs, our unfailing comrades, we frequently got entangled and bewildered among the hills, until we had to trust to mere chance for the lodging of the night. Adventures of this sort were quite to his taste, and the more for the perplexities which on such occasions befell our attendant squires, mine a lanky Savoyard, his a portly Scotch butler, both of them uncommonly bad horsemen, and both equally sensitive about their personal dignity, which the ruggedness of the ground often made it a matter of some difficulty for either of them to maintain, but more especially for my poor foreigner, whose seat resembled that of a pair of compasses astride. Scott’s heavy lumbering *beau-fetier* had provided himself against the mountain showers with a huge cloak, which, when the cavalcade were at gallop, streamed at full stretch from his shoulders, and kept flapping in the other’s face, who, having more than enough to do in preserving his own equilibrium, could not think of attempting at any time to control the pace of his steed, and had no relief but fuming and *peste* at the *sacré manteau*, in language happily unintelligible to its wearer. Now and then some ditch or turf fence rendered it indispensable to adventure on a leap, and no farce could have been more amusing than the display of politeness which then occurred between these worthy equestrians, each courteously declining in favour of his friend the honour of the first experiment, the horses fretting impatient beneath them, and the dogs clamouring encouragement. The horses generally terminated the dispute by renouncing allegiance and springing forward without waiting the pleasure of the riders, who had to settle the matter with their saddles as they best could.

"One of our earliest expeditions was to visit the wild scenery of the mountainous tract above Moffat, including the cascade of the "Grey Mare's Tail," and the dark tarn called "Loch Skene." In our ascent to the lake we got completely bewildered in the thick fog which generally envelopes the rugged features of that lonely region; and, as we were groping through the maze of bogs, the ground gave way, and down went horse and horsemen pell-mell into a slough of peaty mud and black water, out of which, entangled as we were with our plaids and floundering nags, it was no easy matter to get extricated. Indeed, unless we had prudently left our gallant steeds at a farmhouse below, and borrowed hill ponies for the occasion, the result might have been worse than laughable; as it was, we rose like the spirits of the bog, covered *cap-à-pie* with slime, to free themselves from which, our wily ponies took to rolling about on the heather, and we had nothing for it but following their example. At length as we approached the gloomy loch, a huge eagle heaved himself from the margin and rose right over us, screaming his scorn of the intruders; and altogether it would be impossible to picture anything more desolately savage than the scene which opened, as if raised by enchantment on purpose to gratify the poet's eye; thick folds of fog rolling incessantly over the face of the inky waters, but rent asunder now in one direction, and then in another, so as to afford us a glimpse of some projecting rock or naked point of land, or island bearing a few scraggy stumps of pine—and then closing again in universal darkness upon the cheerless waste. Much of the scenery of Old Mortality was drawn from that day's ride.

"It was also in the course of this excursion that we encountered that amusing personage introduced into Guy Mannering as "Tod Gabbie," though the appellation by which he was known in the neighbourhood was "Tod Willie." He was one of those itinerants who gain a subsistence among the moorland farmers by relieving them of foxes, polecats, and the like depredators—a half-witted, stuttering, and most original creature. \* \* \* \*

"Sir Adam Fergusson and the Ettrick Shepherd were of the party that explored Loch Skene.

"I need not tell you that Saint Mary's Loch, and the Loch of the Lowes, were among the most favourite scenes of our excursions, as his fondness for them continued to his last days, and we have both visited them many times together in his company. I may say the same of the Teviot, and the Aill, Borthwick Water, and the lonely towers of Buccleuch and Harden, Minto, Roxburghe, Gilnockie, &c. I think it was either in 1805 or 1806 that I first explored the Borthwick with him, when on our way to pass a week at Langholm with Lord and Lady Dalkeith, upon which occasion the otter hunt, so well described in Guy Mannering, was got up by our noble host; and I can never forget the delight with which Scott observed the enthusiasm of the high-spirited yeomen, who had assembled in multitudes to partake the sport of their dear young chief, well mounted, and dashing about from rock to rock with a reckless ardour which recalled the alacrity of their forefathers in following the Buccleuchs of former days through adventures of a more serious order."

About this time Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the

Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by "a faithful terrier bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds." This day they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet, and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr. Wordsworth say that it would be difficult to express the feelings with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy.

After leaving Mr. Wordsworth, Scott carried his wife to spend a few days at Gilsland, among the scenes where they had first met; and his reception by the company at the wells was such as to make him look back with something of regret, as well as of satisfaction, to the change that had occurred in his circumstances since 1797. They were, however, enjoying themselves much there, when he received intelligence which induced him to believe that a French force was about to land in Scotland—the alarm, indeed, had spread far and wide; and a mighty gathering of volunteers, horse and foot, from the Lothians and the Border country, took place in consequence at Dalkeith. He was not slow to obey the summons. He had luckily chosen to accompany on horseback the carriage in which Mrs. Scott travelled. His good steed carried him to the spot of rendezvous, full a hundred miles from Gilsland, within twenty-four hours; and on reaching it, though no doubt to his disappointment the alarm had already blown over, he was delighted with the general enthusiasm that had thus been put to the test, and, above all, by the rapidity with which the yeomen of Ettrick Forest had poured down from their glens, under the guidance of his good friend and neighbour, Mr. Pringle of Torwoodlee. These fine fellows were quartered along with the Edinburgh troop when he reached Dalkeith and Musselburgh; and after some sham battling, and a few evenings of high jollity had crowned the needless muster of the beacon-fires,\* he immediately turned his horse again towards the south, and rejoined Mrs. Scott at Carlisle.

By the way, it was during his fiery ride from Gilsland to Dalkeith, on the occasion above mentioned, that he composed his *Bard's Incantation*, first published six years afterwards in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* :—

"The forest of Glenmore is drear,  
It is all of black pine and the dark oak-tree," &c.—

and the verses bear the full stamp of the feelings of the moment.

Shortly after he was re-established at Ashiestiel, he was visited there by Mr. Southey, this being, I believe, their first meeting.

\* See note, "Alarm of Invasion," *Antiquary*, vol. ii. p. 333.

While the first volumes of his *Dryden* were passing through the press, the affair concerning the clerkship of the Court of Session, opened nine or ten months before, had not been neglected by the friends on whose counsel and assistance Scott had relied. In one of his prefaces of 1830, he briefly tells the issue of this negotiation, which he justly describes as "an important circumstance in his life, of a nature to relieve him from the anxiety which he must otherwise have felt as one upon the precarious tenure of whose own life rested the principal prospects of his family, and especially as one who had necessarily some dependence on the proverbially capricious favour of the public." Whether Mr. Pitt's hint to Mr. William Dundas, that he would willingly find an opportunity to promote the interests of the author of the *Lay*, or some conversation between the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, first encouraged him to this direction of his views, I am not able to state distinctly; but I believe that the desire to see his fortunes placed on some more substantial basis was at this time partaken pretty equally by the three persons who had the principal influence in the distribution of the Crown patronage in Scotland; and as his object was rather to secure a future than an immediate increase of official income, it was comparatively easy to make such an arrangement as would satisfy his ambition. George Home of Wedderburn, in Berwickshire, a gentleman of considerable literary acquirements, and an old friend of Scott's family, had now served as Clerk of Session for upwards of thirty years. In those days there was no system of retiring pensions for the worn-out functionary of this class, and the usual method was, either that he should resign in favour of a successor who advanced a sum of money according to the circumstances of his age and health, or for a coadjutor to be associated with him in his patent, who undertook the duty on condition of a division of salary. Scott offered to relieve Mr. Home of all the labours of his office, and to allow him, nevertheless, to retain its emoluments entire during his lifetime; and the aged clerk of course joined his exertions to procure a conjoint patent on these very advantageous terms. Mr. Home resigned, and a new patent was drawn out accordingly; but, by a clerical inadvertency, it was drawn out solely in Scott's favour, no mention of Mr. Home being inserted in the instrument. Although, therefore, the sign-manual had been affixed, and there remained nothing but to pay the fees and take out the commission, Scott, on discovering this omission, could not, of course, proceed in the business; since, in the event of his dying before Mr. Home, that gentleman would have lost the vested interest which he had stipulated to retain. A pending charge of pecuniary corruption had compelled Lord Melville to retire from office some time before Mr. Pitt's death; and the cloud of popular obloquy under which he now laboured, rendered it impossible that Scott should expect assistance from the quarter to which, under any other circumstances, he would naturally have turned for extrication from this difficulty. He therefore, as soon as the Fox and Grenville Cabinet had been nominated, proceeded to London, to make in his own person such representations as might be necessary to secure the issuing of the patent in the shape originally intended.

It seems wonderful that he should ever have doubted for a single moment of the result; since, had the new Cabinet been purely Whig,

and had he been the most notorious and violent of Tory partisans, neither of which was the case, the arrangement had been not only virtually, but, with the exception of an evident official blunder, formally completed, and no Secretary of State, as I must think, could have refused to rectify the paltry mistake in question without a dereliction of every principle of honour. The seals of the Home Office had been placed in the hands of a nobleman of the highest character—moreover, an ardent lover of literature; while the chief of the new Ministry was one of the most generous as well as tasteful of mankind; and accordingly, when the circumstances were explained, there occurred no hesitation whatever on their parts. “I had,” says Scott, “the honour of an interview with Earl Spencer, and he in the most handsome manner gave directions that the commission should issue as originally intended; adding that, the matter having received the royal assent, he regarded only as a claim of justice what he would willingly have done as an act of favour.” He adds, “I never saw Mr. Fox on this or any other occasion, and never made any application to him, conceiving that in doing so I might have been supposed to express political opinions different from those which I had always professed. In his private capacity, there is no man to whom I would have been more proud to owe an obligation—had I been so distinguished.”\*

In January, 1806, however, Scott had by no means measured either the character, the feelings, or the arrangements of great public functionaries by the standard with which observation and experience subsequently furnished him. He had breathed hitherto, as far as political questions of all sorts were concerned, the hot atmosphere of a very narrow scene, and seems to have pictured to himself Whitehall and Downing Street as only a wider stage for the exhibition of the bitter and fanatical prejudices that tormented the petty circles of the Parliament House at Edinburgh, the true bearing and scope of which no man in after days more thoroughly understood, or more sincerely pitied.

*Extract from a Letter of Scott's to the Earl of Dalketh.*

“London, 11th Feb., 1806.

“MY DEAR LORD,—

“I cannot help flattering myself—for perhaps it is flattering myself—that the noble architect of the Border Minstrel's little fortune has been sometimes anxious for the security of that lowly edifice, during the tempest which has overturned so many palaces and towers. If I am right in my supposition, it will give you pleasure to learn that, notwithstanding some little rubs, I have been able to carry through the transaction which your lordship sanctioned by your influence and approbation, and that in a way very pleasing to my own feelings. Lord Spencer, upon the nature of the transaction being explained in an audience with which he favoured me, was pleased to direct the commission to be issued, as an act of justice, regretting, he said, it had not been from the beginning his own deed. This was doing the thing handsomely, and like an English nobleman. I have been very much fêted and caressed here, almost,

\* Introduction to *Marmion*, 1830.

indeed, to suffocation, but have been made amends by meeting some old friends. One of the kindest was Lord Somerville, who volunteered introducing me to Lord Spencer, as much, I am convinced, from respect to your lordship's protection and wishes, as from a desire to serve me personally. He seemed very anxious to do anything in his power which might evince a wish to be of use to your *protégé*. Lord Minto was also infinitely kind and active, and his influence with Lord Spencer would, I am convinced, have been stretched to the utmost in my favour, had not Lord Spencer's own view of the subject been perfectly sufficient.

"After all, a little literary reputation is of some use here. I suppose Solomon, when he compared a good name to a pot of ointment, meant that it oiled the hinges of the hall doors into which the possessors of that inestimable treasure wished to penetrate. What a *good* name was in Jerusalem, a *known* name seems to be in London. If you are celebrated for writing verses or for slicing cucumbers, for being two feet taller or two feet less than any other biped, for acting plays when you should be whipped at school, or for attending schools and institutions when you should be preparing for your grave—your notoriety becomes a talisman—an 'Open Sesame' before which everything gives way—till you are voted a bore, and discarded for a new plaything. As this is a consummation of notoriety which I am by no means ambitious of experiencing, I hope I shall be very soon able to shape my course northward, to enjoy my good fortune at my leisure, and snap my fingers at the bar and all its works.

\* \* \* \* \*

I shall not dwell at present upon Scott's method of conduct in the circumstances of an eminently popular author beleaguered by the importunities of fashionable admirers; his bearing when first exposed to such influences was exactly what it was to the end.

Caroline, Princess of Wales, was in those days considered among the Tories, whose politics her husband had uniformly opposed, as the victim of unmerited misfortune, cast aside, from the mere wantonness of caprice, by a gay and dissolute voluptuary; while the Prince's Whig associates had espoused his quarrel, and were already, as the event showed, prepared to act, publicly as well as privately, as if they believed her to be among the most abandoned of her sex. I know not by whom Scott was first introduced to her little Court at Blackheath, but I think it was probably through Mrs. Hayman, a lady of her bedchamber, several of whose notes and letters occur about this time in the collection of his correspondence. The careless levity of the Princess's manner was observed by him, as I have heard him say, with much regret, as likely to bring the purity of heart and mind, for which he gave her credit, into suspicion. For example, when in the course of the evening she conducted him by himself to admire some flowers in a conservatory, and, the place being rather dark, his lameness occasioned him to hesitate for a moment in following her down some steps which she had taken at a skip, she turned round and said, with mock indignation, "Ah! false and faint-heart troubadour, you will not trust yourself with me for fear of your neck!"

I find from one of Mrs. Hayman's letters, that on being asked, at Montague House, to recite some verses of his own, he replied that he had

none unpublished which he thought worthy of her Royal Highness's attention, but introduced a short account of the Ettrick Shepherd, and repeated one of the ballads of the *Mountain Bard*, for which he was then endeavouring to procure subscribers. The Princess appears to have been interested by the story, and she affected, at all events, to be pleased with the lines; she desired that her name might be placed on the Shepherd's list, and thus he had at least one gleam of royal patronage.

It was during the same visit to London that Scott first saw Joanna Baillie, of whose Plays on the Passions he had been, from their first appearance, an enthusiastic admirer. The late Mr. Sotheby, the translator of Oberon, &c., &c., was the mutual friend who introduced him to the poetess of Hampstead. Being asked very lately what impression he made upon her at this interview—"I was at first," she answered, "a little disappointed, for I was fresh from the Lay, and had pictured to myself an ideal elegance and refinement of feature; but I said to myself, If I had been in a crowd, and at a loss what to do, I should have fixed upon that face among a thousand, as the sure index of the benevolence and the shrewdness that would and could help me in my strait. We had not talked long, however, before I saw in the expressive play of his countenance far more even of elegance and refinement than I had missed in its mere lines." The acquaintance thus begun, soon ripened into a most affectionate intimacy between him and this remarkable woman; and thenceforth she and her distinguished brother, Dr. Matthew Baillie, were among the friends to whose intercourse he looked forward with the greatest pleasure when about to visit the metropolis.

I ought to have mentioned before, that he had known Mr. Sotheby at a very early period of life, that amiable and excellent man having been stationed for some time at Edinburgh while serving his Majesty as a captain of dragoons. Scott ever retained for him a sincere regard; he was always, when in London, a frequent guest at his hospitable board, and owed to him the personal acquaintance of not a few of their most eminent contemporaries in various departments of literature and art.

When the Court opened after the spring recess, Scott entered upon his new duties as one of the Principal Clerks of Session; and as he continued to discharge them with exemplary regularity, and to the entire satisfaction both of the judges and the bar, during the long period of twenty-five years, I think it proper to tell precisely in what they consisted, the more so because, in his letter to Ellis of the 25th January, he has himself (characteristically enough) under-stated them.

The Court of Session sits at Edinburgh from the 12th of May to the 12th of July, and again from the 12th of November, with a short interval at Christmas, to the 12th of March. The judges of the Inner Court took their places on the bench, in his time, every morning not later than ten o'clock, and remained according to the amount of business ready for dispatch, but seldom for less than four or more than six hours daily; during which space the principal clerks continued seated at a table below the bench to watch the progress of the suits, and record the decisions—the cases, of all classes, being equally apportioned among their number. The Court of Session, however, does not sit on Monday, that day being reserved for the criminal business of the High Court of Justiciary; and

there is also another blank day every other week,—the *Tiend Wednesday*, as it is called, when the judges are assembled for the hearing of tithe questions, which belong to a separate jurisdiction, of comparatively modern creation, and having its own separate establishment of officers. On the whole, then, Scott's attendance in Court may be taken to have amounted, on the average, to from four to six hours daily during rather less than six months out of the twelve.

Not a little of the clerk's business in Court is merely formal, and indeed mechanical; but there are few days in which he is not called upon for the exertion of his higher faculties, in reducing the decisions of the Bench, orally pronounced, to technical shape; which in a new, complex, or difficult case, cannot be satisfactorily done without close attention to all the previous proceedings and written documents, an accurate understanding of the principles or precedents on which it has been determined, and a thorough command of the whole vocabulary of legal forms. Dull or indolent men, promoted through the mere wantonness of political patronage, might, no doubt, contrive to devolve the harder part of their duty upon humbler assistants; but, in general, the office had been held by gentlemen of high character and attainments, and more than one among Scott's own colleagues enjoyed the reputation of legal science that would have done honour to the Bench. Such men, of course, prided themselves on doing well whatever it was their proper function to do; and it was by their example, not that of the drones who condescended to lean upon unseen and irresponsible inferiors, that Scott uniformly modelled his own conduct as a Clerk of Session. To do this required, of necessity, constant study of law papers and authorities at home. There was also a great deal of really base drudgery, such as the authenticating of registered deeds, by signature, which he had to go through out of Court; he had, too, a *Shrievalty*, though not a heavy one, all the while upon his hands;—and on the whole, it forms one of the most remarkable features in his history, that, throughout the most active period of his literary career he must have devoted a large proportion of his hours, during half at least of every year, to the conscientious discharge of professional duties.

Henceforth, then, when in Edinburgh, his literary work was performed chiefly before breakfast—with the assistance of such evening hours as he could contrive to rescue from the consideration of Court papers, and from those social engagements in which, year after year, as his celebrity advanced, he was of necessity more and more largely involved; and of those entire days during which the Court of Session did not sit—days which, by most of those holding the same official station, were given to relaxation and amusement. So long as he continued quartermaster of the volunteer cavalry, of course he had, even while in Edinburgh, some occasional horse exercise; but in general his town life henceforth was in that respect as inactive as his country life ever was the reverse. He scorned for a long while to attach any consequence to this complete alternation of habits; but we shall find him confessing in the sequel that it proved highly injurious to his bodily health.

I may here observe that the duties of his clerkship brought him into close daily connection with a set of gentlemen, most of whom were soon

regarded by him with the most cordial affection and confidence. Among his fellow-clerks were David Hume (the nephew of the historian), whose lectures on the Law of Scotland are characterized with just eulogy in the Ashiestiel Memoir, and who subsequently became a Baron of the Exchequer, a man as virtuous and aimable as conspicuous for masculine vigour of intellect and variety of knowledge. Another was Hector Macdonald Buchanan of Drummakiln, a frank-hearted and generous gentleman, not the less acceptable to Scott for the Highland prejudices which he inherited with the high blood of Clanranald, at whose beautiful seat of Ross Priory, on the shores of Loch Lomond, he was henceforth almost annually a visitor—a circumstance which has left many traces in the Waverley Novels. A third (though I believe of later appointment), with whom his intimacy was not less strict, was the late excellent Sir Robert Dundas, of Beechwood, Bart.; and a fourth was the friend of his boyhood, one of the dearest he ever had, Colin Mackenzie of Portmore. With these gentlemen's families, he and his lived in such constant familiarity of kindness, that the children all called their fathers' colleagues *uncles*, and the mothers of the little friends *aunts*; and, in truth, the establishment was a brotherhood.

Scott's nomination as Clerk of Session appeared in the same *Gazette* (March 8, 1806) which announced the instalment of the Hon. Henry Erskine and John Clerk of Eldin as Lord Advocate and Solicitor-General for Scotland. The promotion at such a moment, of a distinguished Tory, might well excite the wonder of the Parliament House; and even when the circumstances were explained, the inferior local adherents of the tri-umphant cause were far from considering the conduct of their superiors in this matter with feelings of satisfaction. The indication of such humours was deeply resented by his haughty spirit; and he in his turn showed his irritation in a manner well calculated to extend to higher quarters the spleen with which his advancement had been regarded by persons wholly unworthy of his attention. In short, it was almost immediately after a Whig Ministry had gazetted his appointment to an office which had for twelve months formed a principal object of his ambition, that, rebelling against the implied suspicion of his having accepted something like a personal obligation at the hands of adverse politicians, he for the first time put himself forward as a decided Tory partisan.

The impeachment of Lord Melville was among the first measures of the new Government; and personal affection and gratitude graced as well as heightened the zeal with which Scott watched the issue of this, in his eyes, vindictive proceeding; but, though the ex-Minister's ultimate acquittal was, as to all the charges involving his personal honour, complete, it must now be allowed that the investigation brought out many circumstances by no means creditable to his discretion; and the rejoicings of his friends ought not, therefore, to have been scornfully jubilant. Such they were, however—at least at Edinburgh; and Scott took his share in them by inditing a song, which was sung by James Ballantyne, and received with clamorous applauses, at a public dinner given in honour of the event on the 27th of June, 1806.\*

\* "Health to Lord Melville," &c. See Poetical Works.

The song gave great offence to the many sincere personal friends whom Scott numbered among the upper ranks of the Whigs; and, in particular, it created a marked coldness towards him on the part of the accomplished and amiable Countess of Rosslyn (a very intimate friend of his favourite patroness, Lady Dalkeith), which, as his letters show, wounded his feelings severely—the more so, I have no doubt, because a little reflection must have made him repent not a few of his allusions.

Scott's Tory feelings appear to have been kept in a very excited state during the whole of this short reign of the Whigs. He then, for the first time, mingled keenly in the details of county politics—canvassed electors—harangued meetings—and, in a word, made himself conspicuous as a leading instrument of his party, more especially as an indefatigable local manager, wherever the parliamentary interest of the Buccleuch family was in peril. But he was, in truth, earnest and serious in his belief that the new rulers of the country were disposed to abolish many of its most valuable institutions; and he regarded with special jealousy certain schemes of innovation with respect to the Courts of Law and the administration of justice, which were set on foot by the Crown officers for Scotland. At a debate of the Faculty of Advocates on some of these propositions, he made a speech much longer than any he had ever before delivered in that assembly; and several who heard it have assured me that it had a flow and energy of eloquence for which those who knew him best had been quite unprepared. When the meeting broke up, he walked across *the Mound*, on his way to Castle Street, between Mr. Jeffrey and another of his reforming friends, who complimented him on the rhetorical powers he had been displaying, and would willingly have treated the subject-matter of the discussion playfully. But his feelings had moved to an extent far beyond their apprehension. He exclaimed, "No, no, 'tis no laughing matter: little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain." And so saying, he turned round to conceal his agitation—but not until Mr. Jeffrey saw tears gushing down his cheek—resting his head until he recovered himself on the wall of the Mound. Seldom, if ever, in his more advanced age, did any feelings obtain such mastery.

## CHAPTER VII.

EDITHS DRYDEN—MARMION PUBLISHED—QUARREL WITH CONSTABLE—  
BALLANTYNE ESTABLISHED AS BOOKSELLER—PROJECT OF QUARTERLY REVIEW.

DURING the whole of 1806 and 1807 Dryden continued to occupy the greater share of Scott's literary hours; but in the course of the former year he found time, and, notwithstanding all these political bickerings, inclination to draw up three papers for the Edinburgh Review, viz., on the poems and translations of the Hon. William Herbert; a second, more valuable and elaborate, in which he compared the *Specimens* of Early English Romances, by Ellis, with the *Selection* of Ancient English Metrical Romances, by Ritson; and lastly, that exquisite piece of humour, his article on the *Miseries of Human Life*, to which Mr. Jeffrey added some, if not all, of the *Reviewers' Groans*, with which it concludes. It was in September, 1806, too, that Messrs. Longman put forth, in a separate volume, those of his own Ballads which, having been included in the *Minstrelsy*, were already their property, together with a collection of his Lyrical Pieces, for which he received £100. This publication, obviously suggested by the continued popularity of the *Lay*, was highly successful, seven thousand copies having been disposed of before the first collective edition of his Poetical Works appeared. He had also proposed to include the *House of Aspen* in the same volume, but on reflection once more laid his prose tragedy aside. About the same time he issued, though without his name, a miscellaneous volume, entitled, *Original Memoirs written during the Great Civil Wars, being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby; and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson, with Notes, &c.* Scott's preface consists of a brief but elegant and interesting biography of the gallant cavalier Slingsby; his notes are few and unimportant. This volume (by which he gained nothing as editor) was put forth in October by Messrs. Constable; and in November, 1806, he began *Marmion*, the publication of which was the first important business of his in which that enterprising firm had a primary part.

He was at this time in frequent communication with several leading booksellers, each of whom would willingly have engrossed his labours; but from the moment that his literary undertakings began to be serious, he seems to have resolved against forming so strict a connection with any one publisher, as might at all interfere with the freedom of his transactions. I think it not improbable that his interests as the partner of Ballantyne may have had some influence in this part of his conduct; at all events, there can be little doubt that the hope of sharing more and

more in the profits of Scott's original works induced the competing booksellers to continue and extend their patronage of the Edinburgh printer, who had been introduced to their notice as the personal friend of the most rising author of the day. But, nevertheless, I can have no doubt that Scott was mainly guided by his love of independence. It was always his maxim, that no author should ever let any one house fancy that they had obtained a right of monopoly over his works—or, as he expressed it, in the language of the Scotch feudalists, "that they had completely thirled him to their mill;" and through life, as we shall see, the instant he perceived the least trace of this feeling, he asserted his freedom, not by word, but by some decided deed, on whatever considerations of pecuniary convenience the step might make it necessary for him to trample. Of the conduct of Messrs. Longman, who had been principally concerned in the publication of the *Minstrelsy*, the *Lay*, *Sir Tristrem*, and the *Ballads*, he certainly could have had no reason to complain; on the contrary, he has in various places attested that it was liberal and handsome beyond his expectation; but, nevertheless, a negotiation which they now opened proved fruitless, and ultimately they had no share whatever in the second of his original works.

Constable offered a thousand guineas for the poem very shortly after it was begun, and without having seen one line of it; and Scott, without hesitation, accepted this proposal. It may be gathered from the Introduction of 1830, that private circumstances of a delicate nature rendered it highly desirable for him to obtain the immediate command of such a sum: the price was actually paid long before the poem was published; and it suits very well with Constable's character to suppose that his readiness to advance the money may have outstripped the calculations of more established dealers, and thus cast the balance in his favour. He was not, however, so unwise as to keep the whole adventure to himself. His bargain being fairly concluded, he tendered one-fourth of the copy-right to Mr. Miller, of Albemarle Street, and another to Mr. Murray, then of Fleet Street, London; and both these booksellers appear to have embraced his proposition with eagerness. "I am," Murray wrote to Constable, on the 6th February, 1807, "truly sensible of the kind remembrance of me in your liberal purchase. You have rendered Mr. Miller no less happy by your admission of him; and we both view it as honourable, profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The news that a thousand guineas had been paid for an unseen and unfinished MS. appeared in those days portentous; and it must be allowed that the writer who received such a sum for a performance in embryo, had made a great step in the hazards as well as in the honours of authorship.

The private circumstances which precipitated his reappearance as a poet were connected with his brother Thomas's final withdrawal from the profession of a Writer to the Signet, which arrangement seems to have become quite necessary towards the end of 1806; but it is extremely improbable that, in the absence of any such occurrence, a young, energetic, and ambitious man would have long resisted the cheering stimulus of such success as had attended the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The first four of the Introductory Epistles of *Marmion* are dated

Ashestiel, and they point out very distinctly some of the "spots" which, after the lapse of so many years, he remembered with pleasure, for their connection with particular passages of *Marmion*. There is a knoll with some tall old ashes on the adjoining farm of the Peel, where he was very fond of sitting by himself, and it still bears the name of the *Sheriff's Knowe*. Another favourite seat was beneath a huge oak hard by the Tweed, at the extremity of the *haugh* of Ashestiel.

He frequently wandered far from home, however, attended only by his dog, and would return late in the evening, having let hours after hours slip away among the soft and melancholy wildernesses where Yarrow creeps from her fountains. The lines,

" Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,  
By lone Saint Mary's silent lake," &c.,

paint a scene not less impressive than what Byron found amidst the gigantic pines of the forest of Ravenna; and how completely does he set himself before us in the moment of his gentler and more solemn inspiration, by the closing couplet,

" Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,  
So stilly is the solitude."

But when the theme was of a more stirring order, he enjoyed pursuing it over brake and fell at the full speed of his *Lieutenant*. I well remember his saying, as I rode with him across the hills from Ashestiel to Newark one day in his declining years—"Oh, man, I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of *Marmion*, but a trotting canny pony must serve me now." His friend, Mr. Skene, however, informs me that many of the more energetic descriptions, and particularly that of the battle of Flodden, were struck out while he was in quarters again with his cavalry, in the autumn of 1807. "In the intervals of drilling," he says, "Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands, within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Musselburgh, he often came and placed himself beside me, to repeat the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise."

He seems to have communicated fragments of the poem very freely during the whole of its progress. As early as the 22nd February, 1807, I find Mrs. Hayman acknowledging, in the name of the Princess of Wales, the receipt of a copy of the Introduction to Canto III., in which occurs the tribute to her Royal Highness's heroic father, mortally wounded the year before at Jena—a tribute so grateful to her feelings that she herself shortly after sent the poet an elegant silver vase as a memorial of her thankfulness. And about the same time the Marchioness of Abercorn expresses the delight with which both she and her lord had read the generous verses on Pitt and Fox, in another of those epistles. But his connection with this noble family was no new one; for his father, and afterwards his brother Thomas, had been the auditors of their Scotch rental.

In March his researches concerning Dryden carried him again to the south. During several weeks he gave his day pretty regularly to the pamphlets and MSS. of the British Museum, and the evening to the brilliant societies that now courted him whenever he came within their sphere. His recent political demonstrations during the brief reign of the Whigs seem to have procured for him on this occasion a welcome of redoubled warmth among the leaders of his own now once more victorious party. "As I hail," he writes to his brother-in-law in India, "contrary to many who avowed the same opinions in sunshine, held fast my integrity during the Foxites' interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the new Administration." But he uniformly reserved his Saturday and Sunday either for Mr. Ellis, at Sunninghill, or Lord and Lady Abercorn, at their beautiful villa near Stanmore; and the press copy of Cantos I. and II. of *Marmion* attests that most of it reached Ballantyne in sheets, franked by the Marquis, or his son-in-law, Lord Aberdeen, during April, 1807.

Before he turned homeward he made a short visit to his friend William Stewart Rose, at his cottage of Gundimore, in Hampshire, and enjoyed in his company various long rides in the New Forest, a day in the dockyard of Portsmouth, and two or three more in the Isle of Wight. Several sheets of the MS. and corrected proofs of Canto III. are also under covers franked from Gundimore by Mr. Rose; and I think I must quote the note which accompanied one of these detachments, as showing the good-natured buoyancy of mind and temper with which the poet received in every stage of his progress the hints and suggestions of his watchful friends, Erskine and Ballantyne. The latter having animadverted on the first draught of the song "Where shall the lover rest?" and sketched what he thought would be a better arrangement of the stanza—Scott answers as follows:—

"DEAR JAMES,—

"I am much obliged to you for the rhymes. I presume it can make no difference as to the air if the first three lines rhyme; and I wish to know, with your leisure, if it is absolutely necessary that the fourth should be out of poetic rhythm, as 'the deserted fair one' certainly is.—For example, would this do?

"Should my heart from thee falter,  
To another love alter,  
(For the rhyme we'll say Walter)  
Deserting my lover."

There is here the same number of syllables, but arranged in cadence. I return the proof and send more copy. There will be six cantos. Yours truly,  
"W. S."

In the first week of May we find him at Lichfield, having diverged from the great road to Scotland for the purpose of visiting Miss Seward. Her account of her old correspondent, whom till now she had never seen, was addressed to Mr. Cary, the translator of Dante; and it may interest the reader to compare it with other similar sketches of earlier and later date. "On Friday last," she says, "the poetically great Walter Scott

came 'like a sunbeam to my dwelling.' This proudest boast of the Caledonian Muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr. Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features is elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids: he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles; and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation—an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness—while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed which his poetry must excite in all who feel the power and graces of human inspiration. . . . Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson, also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others. The stranger guest delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. Such visits are among the most high prized honours which my writings have procured for me." Miss Seward adds, that she showed him the passage in Cary's Dante where Michael Scott occurs, and that though he admired the spirit and skill of the version, he confessed his inability to find pleasure in the *Divina Comedia*. "The plan," he said, "appeared to him unhappy; the personal malignity and strange mode of revenge presumptuous and uninteresting." By the 12th of May he was at Edinburgh for the commencement of the summer session, and the printing seems thenceforth to have gone on at times with great rapidity, at others slowly and irregularly; the latter cantos having no doubt been merely blocked out when the first went to press, and his professional avocations, but above all his Dryden, occasioning frequent interruptions. Just a year had elapsed from his beginning the poem when he penned the Epistle for Canto IV. at Ashestiel.

The fifth introduction was written in Edinburgh in the month following; that to the last canto, during the Christmas festivities of Merton House, where, from the first days of his ballad-rhyming, down to the close of his life, he, like his bearded ancestor, usually spent that season with the immediate head of the race. The bulky appendix of notes, including a mass of curious antiquarian quotations, must have moved somewhat slowly through the printers' hands; but *Marmion* was at length ready for publication by the middle of February, 1808.

To return to Scott's graver cares while *Marmion* was in progress—among them were those of preparing himself for an office to which he was formally appointed soon afterwards, namely, that of Secretary to a Parliamentary Commission for the Improvement of Scottish Jurisprudence. This Commission, at the head of which was Sir Islay Campbell, Lord President of the Court of Session, continued in operation for two or three years. Scott's salary, as secretary, was a mere trifle; but he had been led to ex-

pect that his exertions in this capacity would lead to better things. In giving a general view of his affairs to his brother-in-law in India, he says : "The Clerk of Session who retired to make way for me retains the appointments, while I do the duty. This was rather a hard bargain, but it was made when the Administration was going to pieces, and I was glad to swim ashore on a plank of the wreck, or, in a word, to be provided for anyhow, before the new people came in. To be sure, nobody could have foreseen that in a year's time my friends were all to be in again. . . . I am principally pleased with my new appointment as being conferred on me by our chief law lords and King's counsel, and consequently an honourable professional distinction. The employment will be but temporary, but may have consequences important to my future lot in life, if I give due satisfaction in the discharge of it." He appears accordingly to have submitted to a great deal of miserable drudgery in mastering beforehand the details of the technical controversies which had called for legislative interference, and he discharged his functions, as usual, with the warm approbation of his superiors ; but no result followed.

It was thus that Mr. Southey, who happened to be in London when *Marmion* was published on the 23rd of February, expressed himself to the author, on his return to Keswick : "Half the poem I had read at Heber's before my own copy arrived. I went punctually to breakfast with him, and he was long enough dressing to let me devour so much of it. The story is made of better materials than the *Lay*, yet they are not so well fitted together. As a whole, it has not pleased me so much—in parts it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in your former poem as the death of *Marmion* : there is nothing finer in its conception anywhere. The introductory epistles I did not wish away, because, as poems, they gave me great pleasure ; but I wished them at the end of the volume, or at the beginning—anywhere except where they were. My taste is perhaps peculiar in disliking all interruptions in narrative poetry. When the poet lets his story sleep, and talks in his own person, it has to me the same sort of unpleasant effect that is produced at the end of an act. You are alive to know what follows, and lo—down comes the curtain, and the fiddlers begin with their abominations. The general opinion, however, is with me in this particular instance."

I pass over a multitude of the congratulatory effusions of inferior names, but must not withhold part of a letter on a folio sheet, written not in the first hurry of excitement, but on the 2nd of May, two months after *Marmion* had reached Sunninghill.

"I have," says Ellis, "been endeavouring to divest myself of those prejudices to which the impression on my own palate would naturally give rise, and to discover the sentiments of those who have only tasted the general compound, after seeing the sweetmeats picked out by my comrades and myself. I have severely questioned all my friends whose critical discernment I could fairly trust, and mean to give you the honest result of their collective opinions ; for which reason, inasmuch as I shall have a good deal to say, besides which, there seems to be a natural connection between foolscap and criticism, I have ventured on this expanse of paper. In the first place, then, all the world are agreed that you are like the elephant mentioned in the *Spectator*, who was the greatest elephant in

the world except himself, and, consequently, that the only question at issue is, whether the Lay or Marmion shall be reputed the most pleasing poem in our language—save and except one or two of Dryden's fables. But, with respect to the two rivals, I think the Lay is, on the whole, the greatest favourite. It is admitted that the fable of Marmion is greatly superior, that it contains a greater diversity of character, that it inspires more interest, and that it is by no means inferior in point of poetical expression; but it is contended that the incident of Deloraine's journey to Melrose surpasses anything in Marmion, and that the personal appearance of the minstrel, who, though the last, is by far the most charming of all minstrels, is by no means compensated by the idea of an author shorn of his picturesque beard, deprived of his harp, and writing letters to his intimate friends. These introductory epistles, indeed, though excellent in themselves, are in fact only interruptions to the fable, and, accordingly, nine out of ten have perused them separately, either after or before the poem—and it is obvious that they cannot have produced, in either case, the effect which was proposed, viz., of relieving the readers' attention, and giving variety to the whole. Perhaps, continue these critics, it would be fair to say that Marmion delights us in spite of its introductory epistles, while the Lay owes its principal charm to the venerable old minstrel:—the two poems may be considered as equally respectable to the talents of the author; but the first, being a more perfect whole, will be more constantly preferred. Now, all this may be very true; but it is no less true that everybody has already read Marmion *more than once*, that it is the subject of general conversation, that it delights all ages and all tastes, and that it is universally allowed to improve upon a second reading. My own opinion is, that both the productions are equally good in their different ways; yet, upon the whole, I had rather be the author of Marmion than of the Lay, because I think its species of excellence of much more difficult attainment. What degree of bulk may be essentially necessary to the corporeal part of an epic poem, I know not; but sure I am that the story of Marmion might have furnished twelve books as easily as six, that the masterly character of Constance would not have been less bewitching had it been much more minutely painted, and that De Wilton might have been dilated with great ease, and even to considerable advantage; in short, that had it been your intention merely to exhibit a spirited romantic story, instead of making that story subservient to the delineation of the manners which prevailed at a certain period of our history, the number and variety of your characters would have suited any scale of painting. Marmion is to Deloraine what Tom Jones is to Joseph Andrews—the varnish of high breeding nowhere diminishes the prominence of the features, and the minion of a king is as light and sinewy a cavalier as the Borderer—rather less ferocious, more wicked, less fit for the hero of a ballad, and far more for the hero of a regular poem. On the whole, I can sincerely assure you, *'sans phrase'*, that, had I seen Marmion without knowing the author, I should have ranked it with Theodore and Honoria,—that is to say, on the very top shelf of English poetry. Now for faults." \* \* \*

Mr. Ellis proceeds to notice some minor blemishes, which he hoped to see erased in a future copy; but as most, if not all, of these were suffi-

ciently dwelt on by the professional critics, whose strictures are affixed to the poem in the last collective edition, and as, moreover, Scott did not avail himself of any of the hints thus publicly as well as privately tendered for his guidance, I shall not swell my page by transcribing more of this elegant letter. The part I have given may no doubt be considered as an epitome of the very highest and most refined of London table-talk on the subject of *Marmion*, during the first freshness of its popularity, and before the *Edinburgh Review*, the only critical journal of which any one in those days thought very seriously, had pronounced its verdict.

When we consider some parts of that judgment, together with the author's personal intimacy with the editor, and the aid which he had of late been affording to the journal itself, it must be allowed that Mr. Jeffrey acquitted himself on this occasion in a manner highly creditable to his courageous sense of duty; and that he relied on being considered as doing so by the poet himself, illustrates equally his sagacity, and the manly candour and strength of mind, for which Scott had all along been esteemed and honoured, the most by those who knew him the best. The number of the *Edinburgh Review* containing the article on *Marmion* was accompanied by this note:—

“DEAR SCOTT,—If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than any other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude, and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with everything I have said, it would mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very long to tell me so. In the meantime, I am very sincerely yours,  
“F. JEFFREY.”

The reader who has the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1808, will, I hope, pause here and read the article as it stands; endeavouring to put himself into the situation of Scott when it was laid upon his desk, together with this ominous billet from the critic, who, as it happened, had been for some time engaged to dine that same Tuesday at his table in Castle Street. I have not room to transcribe the whole; but no unfair notion of its spirit and tenour may be gathered from one or two of the principal paragraphs. After an ingenious little dissertation on epic poetry in general, the reviewer says—

“We are inclined to suspect that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether, equal; and that, if it had had the fate to be the elder-born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer that it has greater faults than that it has greater beauties—though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more flat and tedious passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in

the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the *ballad* pieces and mere episodes which it contains have less finish and poetical beauty, but there is more airiness and spirit in the higher delineations, and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristics of both, however, are evidently the same—a broken narrative, a redundancy of minute description, bursts of unequal and energetic poetry, and a general tone of spirit and animation unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastened by any great delicacy of taste or elegance of fancy.

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"But though we think this last romance of Mr Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret than an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are, in a manner, inseparable from its execution. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favour. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk indeed of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of maintenance, portcullises, wimples, and we know not what besides—just as they did in the days of Dr. Darwin's popularity of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away, and Mr. Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects."

The detailed exposition of faults follows, and it is, I am sure, done in a style on which the critic cannot now reflect with perfect equanimity, any more than on the lofty and decisive tone of the sweeping paragraphs by which it was introduced. All this, however, I can suppose Scott to have gone through with great composure, but he must, I think, have wondered, to say the least, when he found himself accused of having "throughout neglected Scottish feelings and Scottish characters"—he who had just poured out all the patriotic enthusiasm of his soul in so many passages of *Marmion* which every Scotchman to the end of time will have by heart—painted the capital, the court, the camp, the heroic old chieftains of Scotland in colours instinct with a fervour that can never die, and dignified the most fatal of her national misfortunes by a celebration as loftily pathetic as ever blended pride with sorrow—a battle-piece which even his critic had pronounced to be the noblest save in Homer! But not even this injustice was likely to wound him very deeply. Coming from one of the recent witnesses of his passionate agitation on *the Mound*, perhaps he would only smile at it.

At all events, Scott could make allowance for the petulancies into which men the least disposed to injure the feelings of others will sometimes be betrayed when the critical rod is in their hands. He assured Mr. Jeffrey that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinions it expressed, and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed.

Mr. Jeffrey appeared accordingly, and was received by his host with the frankest cordiality, but had the mortification to observe that the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved herself with exemplary civility during the dinner, but could not help saying, in her broken English, when her guest was departing, "Well, good night, Mr. Jeffrey. Dey tell me you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr. Constable has paid *you* very well for writing it." This anecdote was not, perhaps, worth giving; but it has been printed already in an exaggerated shape, so I thought it as well to present the edition which I have derived from the lips of all the three persons concerned. No one, I am sure, will think the worse of any of them for it, least of all of Mrs. Scott. She might well be pardoned if she took to herself more than her own share in the misadventures as well as the successes of the most affectionate of protectors. It was, I believe, about this time when, as Scott has confessed, "the popularity of Marmion gave him such a *heeze*, he had for a moment almost lost his footing," that a shrewd and sly observer, Mrs. Grant, of Laggan, said, wittily enough, upon leaving a brilliant assembly where the poet had been surrounded by all the buzz and glare of fashionable ecstasy: "Mr. Scott always seems to me like a glass, through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper that lies beside it will presently be in a blaze—and no wonder."

I shall not, after so much of and about criticism, say anything more of Marmion in this place than that I have always considered it as, on the whole, the greatest of Scott's poems. There is a certain light, easy, virgin charm about the Lay, which we look for in vain through the subsequent volumes of his verse; but the superior strength, and breadth, and boldness both of conception and execution in the Marmion appear to me indisputable. The great blot, the combination of *mean felony* with so many noble qualities in the character of the hero, was, as the poet says, severely commented on at the time by the most ardent of his early friends, Leyden; but though he admitted the justice of that criticism, he chose "to let the tree lie as it had fallen." He was also sensible that many of the subordinate and connecting parts of the narrative are flat, harsh, and obscure, but would never make any serious attempt to do away with these imperfections; and perhaps they, after all, heighten by contrast the effect of the passages of high-wrought enthusiasm which alone he considered, in after days, with satisfaction. As for the "epistolary dissertations," it must, I take it, be allowed that they interfered with the flow of the story, when readers were turning the leaves with the first ardour of curiosity; and they were not, in fact, originally intended to be interwoven in any fashion with the romance of Marmion. Though the author himself does not allude to, and had perhaps forgotten the circumstance when writing the Introductory Essay of 1830—they were announced, by an advertisement early in 1807, as "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," to be published in a separate volume, similar to that of the Ballads and Lyrical Pieces; and perhaps it might have been better that this first plan had been adhered to. But however that may be, are there any pages, among all he ever wrote, that one would be more sorry he should not have written? They are among the most delicious portraiture that genius ever painted of

itself—buoyant, virtuous, happy genius—exulting in its own energies, yet possessed and mastered by a clear, calm, modest mind, and happy only in diffusing happiness around it.

With what gratification those epistles were read by the friends to whom they were addressed it would be superfluous to show. He had, in fact, painted them almost as fully as himself; and who might not have been proud to find a place in such a gallery? The tastes and habits of six of those men, in whose intercourse Scott found the greatest pleasure when his fame was approaching its meridian splendour, are thus preserved for posterity; and when I reflect with what avidity we catch at the least hint which seems to afford us a glimpse of the intimate circle of any great poet of former ages, I cannot but believe that posterity would have held this record precious, even had the individuals been in themselves far less remarkable than a Rose, an Ellis, a Heber, a Skene, a Marriott, and an Erskine.

The feelings of political partisanship find no place in this poem; but though the Edinburgh Reviewers chose to complain of its “manifest neglect of *Scottish* feelings,” I take leave to suspect that the boldness and energy of *British* patriotism which breathes in so many passages, may have had more share than that alleged omission in pointing the pen that criticised Marmion. Scott had sternly and indignantly rebuked and denounced the then too prevalent spirit of anti-national despondence; he had put the trumpet to his lips, and done his part, at least, to sustain the hope and resolution of his countrymen in that struggle from which it was the doctrine of the Edinburgh Review that no sane observer of the times could anticipate anything but ruin and degradation. He must ever be considered as the “mighty minstrel” of the Anti-Gallican War, and it was Marmion that first announced him in that character.

Be all this as it may, Scott's connection with the Edinburgh Review was now broken off; and indeed it was never renewed, except in one instance, many years after, when the strong wish to serve poor Maturin shook him for a moment from his purpose. The loftiest and purest of human beings seldom act but under a mixture of motives, and I shall not attempt to guess in what proportions he was swayed by aversion to the political doctrines which the journal had lately been avowing with increased openness—by dissatisfaction with its judgments of his own works—or, lastly, by the feeling that, whether those judgments were or were not just, it was but an idle business for him to assist by his own pen the popularity of the vehicle that diffused them. That he was influenced more or less by all of these considerations, appears highly probable; and I fancy I can trace some indications of each of them in a letter with which I am favoured by an old friend of mine,—a warm lover of literature, and a sincere admirer both of Scott and Jeffrey, and though numbered among the Tories in the House of Commons, yet one of the most liberal section of his party, who happened to visit Scotland shortly after the article on Marmion appeared, and has set down his recollections of the course of table-talk at a dinner where he for the first time met Scott in company with the brilliant editor of the Edinburgh Review.

“There were,” he says, “only a few people besides the two lions—and assuredly I have seldom passed a more agreeable day. A thousand sub-

jects of literature, antiquities, and manners were started ; and much was I struck, as you may well suppose, by the extent, correctness, discrimination, and accuracy of Jeffrey's information ; equally so with his taste, acuteness, and wit in dissecting every book, author, and story that came in our way. Nothing could surpass the variety of his knowledge, but the easy rapidity of his manner of producing it. He was then in his meridian. Scott delighted to draw him out, delighted also to talk himself, and displayed, I think, even a larger range of anecdote and illustration ; remembering everything, whether true or false, that was characteristic or impressive ; everything that was good, or lovely, or lively. It struck me that there was this great difference—Jeffrey for the most part entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms ; Scott took up the matter where he left it, recalled some compensating beauty or excellence for which no credit had been allowed, and by the recitation, perhaps, of one fine stanza, set the poor victim on his legs again. I believe it was just about this time that Scott had abandoned his place in Mr. Jeffrey's corps. The journal had been started among the clever young society with which Edinburgh abounded when they were both entering life as barristers, and Jeffrey's principal coadjutors for some time were Sydney Smith, Brougham, Horner, Scott himself—and on scientific subjects, Playfair ; but clever contributors were sought for in all quarters. Wit and fun were the first desiderata, and, joined with general talent and literature, carried all before them. Neutrality, or something of the kind, as to party politics, seems to have been originally asserted—the plan being, as Scott understood, not to avoid such questions altogether, but to let them be handled by Whig or Tory indifferently, if only the writer could make his article captivating in point of information and good writing. But it was not long before Brougham dipped the concern deep in witty Whiggery ; and it was thought at the time that some very foolish neglects on the part of Pitt had a principal share in making several of these brilliant young men decide on carrying over their weapons to the enemy's camp. Scott was a strong Tory, nay, by family recollections and poetical feelings of association, a Jacobite. Jeffrey, however, was an early friend—and thus there was a confliction of feelings on both sides. Scott, as I was told, remonstrated against the deepening Whiggery—Jeffrey alleged that he could not resist the wit. Scott offered to try his hand at a witty bit of Toryism—but the editor pleaded off, upon the danger of inconsistency. These differences first cooled, and soon dissolved their federation.

I shall conclude this subject with a summary of booksellers' accounts. *Marmion* was first printed in a splendid quarto, price one guinea and a half. The 2,000 copies of this edition were all disposed of in less than a month, when a second of 3,000 copies, in 8vo, was sent to press. There followed a third and fourth edition, each of 3,000, in 1809 ; a fifth of 2,000, early in 1810 ; and a sixth of 3,000, in two volumes, crown 8vo, with twelve designs by Singleton, before the end of that year ; a seventh of 4,000, and an eighth of 5,000 copies 8vo, in 1811 ; a ninth of 3,000 in 1815 ; a tenth of 500 in 1820 ; an eleventh of 500, and a twelfth of 2,000 copies, in foolscap, both in 1825. The legitimate sale in this country, therefore, down to the time of its being included in the first collective

edition of his Poetical Works, amounted to 31,000; and the aggregate of that sale down to the period at which I am writing (May, 1836) may be stated at 50,000 copies. I presume it is right for me to facilitate the task of future historians of our literature by preserving<sup>a</sup> these details as often as I can. Such particulars respecting many of the great works even of the last century, are already sought for with vain regret; and I anticipate no day when the student of English civilization will pass without curiosity the contemporary reception of the Tale of Flodden Field.

Before *Marmion* was published, a heavy task, begun earlier than the poem and continued throughout its progress, had been nearly completed; and there appeared in the last week of April, 1808, "The Works of John Dryden, now first collected; illustrated with Notes Historical, Critical, and Explanatory, and a Life of the Author. By Walter Scott, Esq. Eighteen volumes, 8vo." This was a bold speculation of William Miller of Albemarle Street, London; and the editor's fee, at forty guineas the volume, was £756. The bulk of the collection, the neglect into which a majority of the pieces included in it had fallen, the obsoleteness of the party politics which had so largely exercised the author's pen, and the indecorum, not seldom running into flagrant indecency, by which transcendent genius had ministered to the appetites of a licentious age, all combined to make the warmest of Scott's friends and admirers doubt whether even his skill and reputation would be found sufficient to insure the success of this undertaking. It was, however, better received than any one—except, perhaps, the courageous bookseller himself—had anticipated. The entire work was reprinted in 1821; and more lately the *Life of Dryden* has been twice republished in collective editions of Scott's prose Miscellanies; nor, perhaps, does that class of his writings include any piece of considerable extent that has, on the whole, obtained higher estimation.

This edition of Dryden was criticized in the *Édinburgh Review* for October, 1808, with great ability, and, on the whole, with admirable candour. The industry and perspicacity with which Scott had carried through his editorial researches and annotations were acknowledged in terms which, had he known the name of his reviewer, must have been doubly gratifying to his feelings; and it was confessed that, in the life of his author, he had corrected with patient honesty, and filled up with lucid and expansive detail, the sometimes careless and often naked outline of Johnson's masterly essay on the same subject. It would be superfluous to quote in this place a specimen of critical skill which has already enjoyed such wide circulation, and which will hereafter, no doubt, be included in the miscellaneous prose works of HALLAM. The points of political faith on which that great writer dissents from the editor of Dryden, would, even if I had the inclination to pursue such a discussion, lead me far astray from the immediate object of these pages; they embrace questions on which the best and wisest of our countrymen will probably continue to take opposite sides, as long as our past history excites a living interest, and our literature is that of an active nation. On the poetical character of Dryden I think the editor and his critic will be found to have expressed substantially much the same judgment; when they appear to differ, the battle strikes me as being about words rather than things, as is likely to

be the case when men of such abilities and attainments approach a subject remote from their personal passions. As might have been expected, the terse and dexterous reviewer has often the better in this logomachy; but when the balance is struck, we discover here, as elsewhere, that Scott's broad and masculine understanding had, by whatever happy hardihood, grasped the very result to which others win their way by the more cautious processes of logical investigation. While nothing has been found easier than to attack his details, his general views on critical questions have seldom, if ever, been successfully impugned.

I wish I could believe that Scott's labours had been sufficient to recall Dryden to his rightful station, not in the opinion of those who make literature the business or chief solace of their lives (for with them he had never forfeited it), but in the general favour of the intelligent public. That such has been the case, however, the not rapid sale of two editions, aided as they were by the greatest of living names, can be no proof; nor have I observed among the numberless recent speculations of the English booksellers, a single reprint of even those tales, satires, and critical essays, not to be familiar with which would, in the last age, have been considered as disgraceful in any one making the least pretension to letters.

Scott's Biography of Dryden—the only life of a great poet which he has left us, and also his only detailed work on the personal fortunes of one to whom literature was a profession—was penned just when he had begun to apprehend his own destiny. On this point of view, forbidden to contemporary delicacy, we may now pause with blameless curiosity; and if I be not mistaken, it will reward our attention. Seriously as he must have in those days been revolving the hazards of literary enterprise, he could not, it is probable, have handled any subject of this class without letting out here and there thoughts and feelings proper to his own biographer's province; but, widely as he and his predecessor may appear to stand apart as regards some of the most important both of intellectual and moral characteristics, they had nevertheless many features of resemblance, both as men and as authors; and I doubt if the entire range of our annals could have furnished a theme more calculated to keep Scott's scrutinizing interest awake than that which opened on him as he contemplated, step by step, the career of Dryden. There are grave lessons which that story was not needed to enforce upon his mind; he required no such beacon to make him revolt from paltering with the dignity of woman or the passions of youth, or insulting, by splenetic levities, the religious convictions of any portion of his countrymen. But Dryden's prostitution of his genius to the petty bitternesses of political warfare, and the consequences both as to the party he served and the antagonists he provoked, might well supply matter for serious consideration to the author of the Melville song. "Where," says Scott, "is the expert swordsman that does not delight in the flourish of his weapon? and a brave man will least of all withdraw himself from his ancient standard when the tide of battle beats against it." But he says also—and I know enough of his own then recent experiences, in his intercourse with some who had been among his earliest and dearest associates, not to apply the language to the circumstances that suggested it: "He who keenly engages in political controversy must not only encounter the vulgar abuse which he may justly condemn, but the

altered eye of friends whose regard is chilled ;" nor when he adds that "the protecting zeal of his party did not compensate Dryden for the loss of those whom he alienated in their service," can I help connecting this reflection too with his own subsequent abstinence from party personalities, in which, had the expert swordsmen's delight in the flourish of his weapon prevailed, he might have rivalled the success of either Dryden or Swift, to be repaid like them by the settled rancour of Whigs and the jealous ingratitude of Tories.

It is curious enough to compare the hesitating style of his apology for that tinge of evanescent superstition which seems to have clouded occasionally Dryden's bright and solid mind, with the open avowal that he has "pride in recording his author's decided admiration of old ballads and popular tales ;" and perhaps his personal feelings were hardly less his prompter where he dismisses, with brief scorn, the sins of negligence and haste, which had been so often urged against Dryden. "Nothing," he says, "is so easily attained as the power of presenting the extrinsic qualities of fine painting, fine music, or fine poetry ; the beauty of colour and outline, the combination of notes, the melody of versification, may be imitated by artists of mediocrity ; and many will view, hear, or peruse their performances without being able positively to discover why they should not, since composed according to all the rules, afford pleasure equal to those of Raphael, Handel, or Dryden. The deficiency lies in the vivifying spirit which, like *alcohol*, may be reduced to the same principle in all the fine arts. The French are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. When criticism becomes a pursuit separate from poetry, those who follow it are apt to forget that the legitimate ends of the art for which they lay down rules are instruction and delight, and that these points being attained, by what road soever, entitles a poet to claim the prize of successful merit. Neither did the learned authors of these disquisitions sufficiently attend to the general disposition of mankind, which cannot be contented even with the happiest imitations of former excellence, but demands novelty as a necessary ingredient for amusement. To insist that every epic poem shall have the plan of the *Iliad*, and every tragedy be modelled by the rules of Aristotle, resembles the principle of the architect who should build all his houses with the same number of windows and of stories. It happened, too, inevitably, that the critics, in the plenipotential authority which they exercised, often assumed as indispensable requisites of the drama, or epopeia, circumstances which, in the great authorities they quoted, were altogether accidental or indifferent. These they erected into laws and handed down as essential, although the forms prescribed have often as little to do with the merit and success of the original from which they are taken as the shape of the drinking glass with the flavour of the wine which it contains." These sentences appear, from the dates, to have been penned immediately after the biographer of Dryden (who wrote no epic) had perused the Edinburgh Review on *Marmion*.

I conclude with a passage, in writing which he seems to have anticipated the only serious critical charge that was ever brought against his edition of Dryden as a whole—namely, the loose and irregular way in which his own æsthetical notions are indicated rather than expounded. "While

Dryden," says Scott, "examined, discussed, admitted, or rejected the rules proposed by others, he forbore, from *prudence, indolence, or a regard for the freedom of Parnassus*, to erect himself into a legislator. His doctrines are scattered without system or pretence to it. It is impossible to read far without finding some maxim for doing or forbearing, which every student of poetry will do well to engrave upon the tablets of his memory; but the author's mode of instruction is neither harsh nor dictatorial."

On the whole it is impossible to doubt that the success of Dryden in rapidly reaching, and till the end of a long life holding undisputed, the summit of public favour and reputation, in spite of his "brave neglect" of minute finishing, narrow laws, and prejudiced authorities, must have had a powerful effect in nerving Scott's hope and resolution for the wide ocean of literary enterprise into which he had now fairly launched his bark. Like Dryden, he felt himself to be "amply stored with acquired knowledge, much of it the fruits of early reading and application;" anticipated that, though, "while engaged in the hurry of composition, or overcome by the lassitude of continued literary labour," he should sometimes "draw with too much liberality on a tenacious memory," no "occasional imperfections would deprive him of his praise;" in short, made up his mind that "pointed and nicely-turned lines, sedulous study, and long and repeated correction and revision," would all be dispensed with, provided their place were supplied, as in Dryden, by "rapidity of conception, a readiness of expressing every idea, without losing anything by the way," "perpetual animation and elasticity of thought;" and language "never laboured, never loitering, never (in Dryden's own phrase) *curse'dly confin'd*."

His engagements with London publishers to edit the Somers' Tracts and Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, were, I believe, entered into before the end of 1807; but Constable appears to have first ascertained them, when he accompanied the second cargo of Marmion to the great southern market; and, alarmed at the prospect of losing his hold on Scott's industry, he at once invited him to follow up his Dryden by an edition of Swift on the same scale,—offering, moreover, to double the rate of payment which he had contracted for with the London publisher of the Dryden; that is to say, to give him £1,500 for the new undertaking. This munificent tender was accepted without hesitation; and as early as May, I find Scott writing to his literary allies in all directions for books, pamphlets, and MSS., materials likely to be serviceable in completing and illustrating the Life and Works of the Dean of St. Patrick's. While these were accumulating about him, which they soon did in greater abundance than he had anticipated, he concluded his labours on Sadler's State Papers, and kept pace, at the same time, with Ballantyne, as the huge collection of the Somers' Tracts continued to move through the press. The Sadler was published in the course of 1809, in three large volumes, quarto; but the last of the thirteen equally ponderous tomes to which Somers extended, was not dismissed from his desk until towards the conclusion of 1812.

He edited this year Strutt's unfinished romance of Queenhoo Hall, and equipped the fourth volume with a conclusion in the fashion of the original; but how little he thought of this matter may be guessed from

one of his notes to Ballantyne, in which he says, "I wish you would see how far the copy of Queenhoo Hall, sent last night, extends, that I may not write more nonsense than enough." The publisher of this work was John Murray, of London. It was immediately preceded by a reprint of Captain Carleton's *Memoirs of the War of the Spanish Succession*, to which he gave a lively preface and various notes; and followed by a similar edition of the *Memoirs of Robert Cary, Earl of Monmouth*,—each of these being a single octavo, printed by Ballantyne and published by Constable.

The republication of Carleton,\* Johnson's eulogy of which fills a pleasant page in Boswell, had probably been suggested by the lively interest which Scott took in the first outburst of Spanish patriotism consequent on Napoleon's transactions at Bayonne. There is one passage in the preface which I must indulge myself by transcribing. Speaking of the absurd recall of Peterborough from the command in which he had exhibited such a wonderful combination of patience and prudence with military daring, he says: "One ostensible reason was that Peterborough's parts were of too lively and mercurial a quality, and that his letters showed more wit than became a general;—a commonplace objection, raised by the dull malignity of commonplace minds, against those whom they see discharging with ease and indifference the tasks which they themselves execute (if at all) with the sweat of their brow and in the heaviness of their hearts. There is a certain hypocrisy in business, whether civil or military, as well as in religion, which they will do well to observe who, not satisfied with discharging their duty, desire also the good repute of men." It was not long before some of the dull malignants of the Parliament House began to insinuate what at length found a dull and dignified mouthpiece in the House of Commons—that if a Clerk of Session had any real business to do, it could not be done well by a man who found time for more literary enterprises than any other author of the age undertook—"wrote more books," Lord Archibald Hamilton serenely added, "than anybody could find leisure to read"—and, moreover, mingled in general society as much as many that had no pursuit but pleasure.

The eager struggling of the different booksellers to engage Scott at this time is a very amusing feature in the voluminous correspondence before me. Had he possessed treble the energy for which it was possible to give any man credit, he could never have encountered a tithe of the projects that the post brought day after day to him, announced with extravagant enthusiasm, and urged with all the arts of conciliation. I shall mention only one out of at least a dozen gigantic schemes which were thus proposed before he had well settled himself to his Swift; and I do so because something of the kind was a few years later carried into execution. This was a General Edition of British Novelists, beginning with Defoe and reaching to the end of the last century, to be set forth with biographical prefaces and illustrative notes by Scott, and printed,

\* I believe it is now pretty generally believed that Carleton's *Memoirs* were among the numberless fabrications of Defoe; but in this case, as in that of his *Cavalier*, he no doubt had before him the rude journal of some officer who had really served in the campaigns described with such an immutable air of truth.

of course, by Ballantyne. The projector was Murray, who was now eager to start on all points in the race with Constable; but this was not, as we shall see presently, the only business that prompted my enterprising friend's first visit to Ashestiel.

Conversing with Scott many years afterwards about the tumult of engagements in which he was thus involved, he said, "Ay, it was enough to tear me to pieces, but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all: my blood was kept at fever-pitch—I felt as if I could have grappled with anything and everything; then, there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author. There were always huge piles of materials to be arranged, sifted, and indexed—volumes of extracts to be transcribed—journeys to be made hither and thither, for ascertaining little facts and dates; in short, I could commonly keep half a dozen of the ragged regiment of Parnassus in tolerable case." I said he must have felt something like what a locomotive engine on a railway might be supposed to do when a score of coal-waggons are seen linking themselves to it the moment it gets the steam up, and it rushes on its course regardless of the burden. "Yes," said he, laughing and making a crashing cut with his axe (for we were felling larches), "but there was a cursed lot of dung-carts too." He was seldom, in fact, without some of these appendages; and I admired nothing more in him than the patient courtesy, the unwearied gentle kindness with which he always treated them, in spite of their delays and blunders, to say nothing of the almost incredible vanity and presumption which more than one of them often exhibited in the midst of their fawning; and I believe, with all their faults, the worst and weakest of them repaid him by a canine fidelity of affection. This part of Scott's character recalls by far the most pleasing trait in that of his last predecessor in the plenitude of literary authority—Dr. Johnson. There was perhaps nothing (except the one great blunder) that had a worse effect on the course of his pecuniary fortunes than the readiness with which he exerted his interest with the booksellers on behalf of inferior writers. Even from the commencement of his connection with Constable in particular, I can trace a continual series of such applications. They stimulated the already too sanguine publisher to numberless risks; and when these failed, the result was, in one shape or another, some corresponding deduction from the fair profits of his own literary labour. "I like well," Constable was often heard to say in the sequel, "I like well Scott's *ain bairns*—but Heaven preserve me from those of his fathering!"

Every now and then, however, he had the rich compensation of finding that his interference had really promoted the worldly interests of some meritorious obscure. Early in 1808 he tasted this pleasure in the case of a poetical shoemaker of Glasgow, Mr. John Struthers, a man of rare worth and very considerable genius, whose Poor Man's Sabbath was recommended to his notice by Joanna Baillie, and shortly after published at his desire by Mr. Constable.

James Hogg was by this time beginning to be generally known and appreciated in Scotland; and the popularity of his Mountain Bard encouraged Scott to more strenuous intercession in his behalf. I have before me a long array of letters on this subject, which passed between Scott

and the Earl of Dalkeith and his brother, Lord Montagu, in 1808. Hogg's prime ambition at this period was to procure an ensigncy in a militia regiment, and he seems to have set little by Scott's representations that the pay of such a situation was very small, and that, if he obtained it, he would probably find his relations with his brother officers far from agreeable. There was, however, another objection which Scott could not hint to the aspirant himself, but which seems to have been duly considered by those who were anxious to promote his views. Militia officers of that day were by no means unlikely to see their nerves put to the test, and the Shepherd's—though he wrote some capital war songs, especially *Donald Macdonald*—were not heroically strung. This was in truth no secret among his early intimates, though he had not measured himself at all exactly on that score, and was even tempted, when he found there was no chance of the militia epaulette, to threaten that he would "list for a soldier" in a marching regiment. Notwithstanding at least one melancholy precedent, the excise, which would have suited him almost as badly as "hugging Brown Bess," was next thought of, and the Shepherd himself seems to have entered into that plan with considerable alacrity; but I know not whether he changed his mind, or what other cause prevented such an appointment from taking place. After various shiftings he at last obtained, as we shall see, from the late Duke of Buccleuch's munificence, the gratuitous life-rent of a small farm in the Vale of Yarrow, and had he contented himself with the careful management of its fields, the rest of his days might have been easy. But he could not withstand the attractions of Edinburgh, which carried him away from Altrive for months every year; and when at home, a warm and hospitable disposition, so often stirred by vanity less pardonable than his, made him convert his cottage into an unpaid hostelry for the reception of endless troops of thoughtless admirers; and thus, in spite of much help and much forbearance, he was never out of one set of pecuniary difficulties before he had begun to weave the meshes of some fresh entanglement. *In pace requiescat*. There will never be such an Ettrick Shepherd again.

I mentioned the name of Joanna Baillie (for "who," as Scott says in a letter of this time, "ever speaks of Miss Sappho?") in connection with the MS. of the Poor Man's Sabbath. From Glasgow, where she had found out Struthers in April, she proceeded to Edinburgh, and took up her abode for a week or two under Scott's roof. Their acquaintance was thus knit into a deep and respectful affection on both sides; and henceforth they maintained a close epistolary correspondence. Within a few weeks after Joanna's departure he was to commence another intimacy not less sincere and cordial with Mr. Morritt of Rokeby.

Scott had now reached a period of life after which real friendships are but seldom formed, and it is fortunate that another English one had been thoroughly compacted before death cut the ties between him and George Ellis.

Several mutual friends had written to recommend Mr. Morritt to his acquaintance—among others, Mr. W. S. Rose and Lady Louisa Stuart.

When Mr. and Mrs. Morritt reached Edinburgh Scott showed them the lions of the town and its vicinity, exactly as if he had nothing else to

attend to but their gratification; and Mr. Morritt recollected with particular pleasure one long day spent in rambling along the Esk by Roslin and Hawthornden,

"Where Jonson sat in Drummond's social shade,"

down to the old haunts of Lasswade.

"When we approached that village," says the Memorandum with which Mr. Morritt favours me, "Scott, who had laid hold of my arm, turned along the road in a direction not leading to the place where the carriage was to meet us. After walking some minutes towards Edinburgh, I suggested that we were losing the scenery of the Esk, and, besides, had Dalkeith Palace yet to see. 'Yes,' said he, 'and I have been bringing you where there is little enough to be seen—only that Scotch cottage,' one by the roadside with a small garth; 'but, though not worth looking at, I could not pass it. It was our first country house when newly married, and many a contrivance we had to make it comfortable. I made a dining-table for it with my own hands. Look at these two miserable willow-trees on either side the gate into the enclosure; they are tied together at the top to be an arch, and a cross made of two sticks over them is not yet decayed. To be sure, it is not much of a lion to show a stranger; but I wanted to see it again myself, for I assure you that after I had constructed it, *mamma*' (Mrs. Scott) 'and I, both of us, thought it so fine, we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the cottage door, in admiration of our own magnificence and its picturesque effect. I did want to see if it was still there—so now we will look after the barouche, and make the best of our way to Dalkeith.' Such were the natural feelings that endeared the author of *Marmion* and the *Lay* to those who 'saw him in his happier hours of social pleasure.' His person at that time may be exactly known from Raeburn's first picture, which had just been executed for his bookseller, Constable, and which was a most faithful likeness of him and his dog Camp. The literal fidelity of the portraiture, however, is its principal merit. The expression is serious and contemplative, very unlike the hilarity and vivacity then habitual to his speaking face, but quite true to what it was in the absence of such excitement. His features struck me at first as commonplace and heavy,—but they were almost always lighted up by the flashes of the mind within. This required a hand more masterly than Raeburn's; and indeed, in my own opinion, Chantrey alone has in his bust attained that, in his case, most difficult task of portraying the features faithfully, and yet giving the real and transient expression of the countenance when animated.

"We passed a week in Edinburgh, chiefly in his society and that of his friends the Mackenzies. We were so far on our way to Brahan Castle, in Ross-shire. Scott unlocked all his antiquarian lore, and supplied us with numberless *data*, such as no guide-book could have furnished, and such as his own Monkbarns might have delighted to give. It would be idle to tell how much pleasure and instruction his advice added to a tour in itself so productive of both, as well as of private friendships and intimacies, now too generally terminated by death, but never severed by caprice or disappointment. His was added to the number by our recep-

tion now in Edinburgh, and, on our return from the Highlands, at Ashiestiel—where he had made us promise to visit him, saying that the farmhouse had pigeonholes enough for such of his friends as could live, like him, on Tweed salmon and Forest mutton. There he was the cherished friend and kind neighbour of every middling Selkirkshire yeoman, just as easily as in Edinburgh he was the companion of clever youth and narrative old age in refined society. He carried us one day to Melrose Abbey or Newark; another, to course with mountain greyhounds by Yarrow braes or St. Mary's Loch, repeating every ballad or legendary tale connected with the scenery; and on a third, we must all go to a farmer's *kirn*, or harvest-home, to dance with Border lasses, on a barn floor, drink whisky punch, and enter with him into all the gossip and good fellowship of his neighbours, on a complete footing of unrestrained conviviality, equality, and mutual respect. His wife and happy young family were clustered round him, and the cordiality of his reception would have unbent a misanthrope.

"At this period his conversation was more equal and animated than any man's that I ever knew. It was most characterized by the extreme felicity and fun of his illustrations, drawn from the whole encyclopædia of life and nature, in a style sometimes too exuberant for written narrative, but which to him was natural and spontaneous. A hundred stories, always apposite, and often interesting the mind by strong pathos, or eminently ludicrous, were daily told, which, with many more, have since been transplanted, almost in the same language, into the Waverley Novels and his other writings. These and his recitations of poetry, which can never be forgotten by those who knew him, made up the charm that his boundless memory enabled him to exert to the wonder of the gaping lovers of wonders. But equally impressive and powerful was the language of his warm heart, and equally wonderful were the conclusions of his vigorous understanding, to those who could return or appreciate either. Among a number of such recollections, I have seen many of the thoughts which then passed through his mind embodied in the delightful prefaces annexed late in life to his poetry and novels. Those on literary quarrels and literary irritability are exactly what he then expressed. Keenly enjoying literature as he did, and indulging his own love of it in perpetual composition, he always maintained the same estimate of it as subordinate and auxiliary to the purposes of life, and rather talked of men and events than of books and criticism. Literary fame, he always said, was a bright feather in the cap, but not the substantial cover of a well-protected head. This sound and manly feeling was what I have seen described by some of his biographers as *pride*, and it will always be thought so by those whose own vanity can only be gratified by the admiration of others, and who mistake shows for realities. None valued the love and applause of others more than Scott; but it was to the love and applause of those he valued in return that he restricted the feeling—without restricting the kindness. Men who did not, or would not, understand this, perpetually mistook him, and, after loading him with undesired eulogy, perhaps in his own house neglected common attention or civility to other parts of his family. It was on such an occasion that I heard him murmur in my ear, 'Author as I am, I wish these good people would recollect that I began with

being a gentleman, and don't mean to give up the character.' Such was all along his feeling, and this, with a slight prejudice common to Scotchmen in favour of ancient and respectable family descent, constituted what in Grub Street is called his *pride*. It was, at least, what Johnson would have justly called *defensive* pride. From all other, and still more from mere vanity, I never knew any man so remarkably free."

The farmer at whose annual *kirn* Scott and all his household were, in those days, regular guests, was Mr. Laidlaw, the Duke of Buccleuch's tenant on the lands of Peel, which are only separated from the eastern terrace of Ashestiel by the ravine and its brook. Mr. Laidlaw was himself possessed of some landed property in the same neighbourhood, and being considered as wealthy, and fond of his wealth, he was usually called among the country people *Laird Nippy*; an expressive designation which it would be difficult to translate. Though a very dry, demure, and taciturn old presbyterian, he could not resist the Sheriff's jokes, nay, he even gradually subdued his scruples so far as to become a pretty constant attendant at his "*English printed prayers*" on the Sundays; which, indeed, were by this time rather more popular than quite suited the capacity of the parlour-chapel. Mr. Laidlaw's wife was a woman of superior mind and manners, a great reader, and one of the few to whom Scott liked lending his books; for most strict and delicate was he always in the care of them, and indeed hardly any trivial occurrence ever seemed to touch his temper at all, except anything like irreverent treatment of a book. The intercourse between the family at Ashestiel and this worthy woman and her children, was a constant interchange of respect and kindness; but I remember to have heard Scott say that the greatest compliment he had ever received in his life was from the rigid old farmer himself; for, years after he had left Ashestiel, he discovered casually that special care had been taken to keep the turf seat on *the Shirra's knoe* in good repair; and this was much from Nippy.

And here I must set down a story which, most readers will smile to be told, was often repeated by Scott, and always with an air that seemed to me, in spite of his endeavours to the contrary, as grave as the usual aspect of Laird Nippy of the Peel. This neighbour was a distant kinsman of his dear friend William Laidlaw, so distant that elsewhere in that condition they would scarcely have remembered any community of blood; but they both traced their descent, in the ninth degree, to an ancestress who, in the days of John Knox, fell into trouble from a suspicion of witchcraft. In her time the Laidlaws were rich and prosperous, and held rank among the best gentry of Tweeddale; but in some evil hour her husband, the head of his blood, reproached her with her addiction to the black art, and she, in her anger, cursed the name and lineage of Laidlaw. Her only son, who stood by, implored her to revoke the malediction, but in vain. Next day, however, on the renewal of his entreaties, she carried him with her into the woods, made him slay a heifer, sacrificed it to the power of evil in his presence, and then, collecting the ashes in her apron, invited the youth to see her commit them to the river. "Follow them," said she, "from stream to pool as long as they float visible, and as many streams as you shall then have passed, for so many generations shall your descendants prosper. After that they shall, like the rest of the name, be poor, and

take their part in my curse." The streams he counted were nine; and now Scott would say, "Look round you in this country, and, sure enough, the Laidlaws are one and all landless men, with the single exception of Auld Nippy." Many times had I heard both him and William Laidlaw tell this story before any suspicion got abroad that Nippy's wealth rested on insecure foundations. Year after year we never escorted a stranger by the Peel but I heard the tale, and at last it came with a new conclusion. "And now, think whatever we choose of it, my good friend Nippy is a bankrupt."

Mr. Morritt's mention of the "happy young family clustered round him" at Laird Nippy's *kirk* reminds me that I ought to say a few words on Scott's method of treating his children in their early days. He had now two boys and two girls—and he never had more. He was not one of those who take much delight in a mere infant, but no father ever devoted more time and tender care to his offspring than he did to each of his, as they successively reached the age when they could listen to him and understand his talk. Like their mute playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, they had at all times free access to his study; he never considered their tattle as any disturbance; they went and came as pleased their fancy; he was always ready to answer their questions; and when they, unconscious how he was engaged, entreated him to lay down his pen and tell them a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a ballad or a legend, kiss them, and set them down again to their marbles or ninepins, and resume his labour as if refreshed by the interruption. From a very early age he made them dine at table, and "to sit up to supper" was the great reward when they had been "very good bairns." In short, he considered it as the highest duty, as well as the sweetest pleasure, of a parent to be the companion of his children. He partook all their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind informal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings that, so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull so he were at home.

Of the irregularity of his own education he speaks with considerable regret in the autobiographical fragment written this year at Ashiestiel; yet his practice does not look as if that feeling had been strongly rooted in his mind, for he never did show much concern about regulating systematically what is usually called education in the case of his own children. It seemed, on the contrary, as if he attached little importance to anything else, so he could perceive that the young curiosity was excited—the intellect, by whatever springs of interest, set in motion. He detested and despised the whole generation of modern children's books, in which the attempt is made to convey accurate notions of scientific minutiae, delighting cordially, on the other hand, in those of the preceding age, which, addressing themselves chiefly to the imagination, obtain through it, as he believed, the best chance of stirring our graver faculties also. He exercised the memory by selecting for tasks of recitation passages of popular verse the most likely to catch the fancy of children, and gradually familiarized them with the ancient history of their own country by arresting attention, in the course of his own oral narrations, on incidents and

characters of a similar description. Nor did he neglect to use the same means of quickening curiosity as to the events of sacred history. On Sunday he never rode—at least, not until his growing infirmity made his pony almost necessary to him—for it was his principle that all domestic animals have a full right to their Sabbath of rest; but after he had read the Church service, he usually walked with his whole family, dogs included, to some favourite spot at a considerable distance from the house—most frequently the ruined tower of Elibank—and there dined with them in the open air on a basket of cold provisions, mixing his wine with the water of the brook beside which they all were grouped around him on the turf; and here, or at home, if the weather kept them from their ramble, his Sunday talk was just such a series of biblical lessons as that which we have preserved for the permanent use of rising generations, in his *Tales of a Grandfather*, on the early history of Scotland. I wish he had committed that other series to writing too. How different that would have been from our thousand compilations of dead epitome and imbecile cant! He had his Bible, the Old Testament especially, by heart, and on these days inwove the simple pathos or sublime enthusiasm of Scripture, in whatever story he was telling, with the same picturesque richness as he did, in his week-day tales, the quaint Scotch of Pitscottie, or some rude romantic old rhyme from Barbour's Bruce or Blind Harry's Wallace.

By many external accomplishments, either in girl or boy, he set little store. He delighted to hear his daughters sing an old ditty, or one of his own framing; but, so the singer appeared to feel the spirit of her ballad, he was not at all critical of the technical execution. There was one thing, however, on which he fixed his heart hardly less than the ancient Persians of the *Cyropædia*; like them, next to love of truth, he held love of horsemanship for the prime point of education. As soon as his eldest girl could sit a pony, she was made the regular attendant of his mountain rides; and they all, as they attained sufficient strength, had the like advancement. He taught them to think nothing of tumbles, and habituated them to his own reckless delight in perilous fords and flooded streams; and they all imbibed in great perfection his passion for horses—as well, I may venture to add, as his deep reverence for the more important article of that Persian training. “Without courage,” he said, “there cannot be truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue.”

He had a horror of boarding-schools—never allowed his girls to learn anything out of his own house, and chose their governess (Miss Miller)—who about this time was domesticated with them, and never left them while they needed one—with far greater regard to her kind good temper and excellent moral and religious principles than to the measure of her attainments in what are called fashionable accomplishments. The admirable system of education for boys in Scotland combines all the advantages of public and private instruction; his carried their satchels to the High School, when the family was in Edinburgh, just as he had done before them, and shared, of course, the evening society of their happy home. But he rarely, if ever, left them in town, when he could himself be in the country; and at Ashestiel he was, for better or for worse, his eldest boy's daily tutor after he began Latin.

The reader does not need to be reminded that Scott at this time had

business enough on his hand. He was deep in Swift, and the Ballantyne press was groaning under a multitude of works, some of them already mentioned, with almost all of which his hand as well as his head had something, more or less, to do. But a serious change was about to take place in his relations with the spirited publishing house which had hitherto been the most efficient supporters of that press; and his letters begin to be much occupied with differences and disputes which, uninteresting as the details would now be, must have cost him many anxious hours in the apparently idle autumn of 1808. Mr. Constable had then for his partner Mr. Alexander Gibson Hunter, afterwards Laird of Blackness, to whose intemperate language, much more than to any part of Constable's own conduct, Scott ascribed this unfortunate alienation, which, however, as well as most of my friend's subsequent misadventures, I am inclined to trace in no small degree to the influence which a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise over the concerns of James Ballantyne.

John Ballantyne, a younger brother of Scott's schoolfellow, had been originally bred to their father's trade of a *merchant*—(that is to say, a dealer in everything from broadcloth to children's tops)—at Kelso; but James's rise in the world was not observed by him without ambitious longings, for he too had a love, and he at least fancied that he had a talent, for literature. He left Kelso abruptly for the chances of the English metropolis. After a short residence in London, where, among other things, he officiated for a few months as clerk in a banking house, the continued intelligence of the printer's prosperity determined him to return to Scotland. Not finding any opening at the moment in Edinburgh, he again tried the shop at Kelso; but his habits had not been improved by his brief sojourn in London, and the business soon melted to nothing in his hands. His goods were disposed of by auction for the benefit of his creditors; the paternal shop was finally closed; and John again quitted his birthplace, under circumstances which, as I shall show in the sequel, had left a deep and painful trace even upon that volatile mind.

He was a quick, active, intrepid little fellow, and in society so very lively and amusing, so full of fun and merriment, such a thoroughly light-hearted droll, all over quaintness and humorous mimicry, and, moreover, such a keen and skilful devotee to all manner of field-sports, from fox-hunting to badger-baiting inclusive, that it was no wonder he should have made a favourable impression on Scott, when he appeared in Edinburgh in this destitute plight, and offered to assist his brother in the management of a concern by which James's comparatively indolent habits were now very severely tried. The contrast between the two brothers was not the least of the amusement: indeed, that continued to amuse him to the last. The elder of these is painted to the life in an early letter of Leyden's, which, on the doctor's death, he, though not (I fancy) without wincing, permitted Scott to print:—"Methinks I see you with your confounded black beard, bull-neck, and upper lip turned up to your nose, while one of your eyebrows is cocked perpendicularly, and the other forms pretty well the base of a right-angled triangle, opening your great gloating eyes, and crying—*But, Leyden!!!*" James was a

short, stout, well-made man, and would have been considered a handsome one, but for those grotesque frowns, starts, and twistings of his features, set off by a certain mock majesty of walk and gesture, which he had perhaps contracted from his usual companions, the emperors and tyrants of the stage. His voice in talk was grave and sonorous, and he sung well (theatrically well), in a fine rich bass. John's tone in singing was a sharp treble—in conversation something between a croak and a squeak. Of his style of story-telling it is sufficient to say that the late Charles Mathews's "old Scotch lady" was but an imperfect copy of the original, which the inimitable comedian first heard in my presence from his lips; he was shorter than James, but lean as a scarecrow, and he rather hopped than walked; his features, too, were naturally good, and he twisted them about quite as much, but in a very different fashion. The elder brother was a *gourmand*—the younger liked his bottle and his bowl, as well as, like Johnny Armstrong, "a hawk, a hound, and a fair woman." Scott used to call the one *Aldiborontiphosphorhonio*, the other *Rigdumfunnidos*. They both entertained him, they both loved and revered him, and I believe would have shed their heart's blood in his service; but they both as men of affairs deeply injured him—and above all, the day that brought John into pecuniary connection with him was the blackest in his calendar. A more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer never rushed into the serious responsibilities of business; but his cleverness, his vivacity, his unaffected zeal, his gay fancy always seeing the light side of everything, his imperturbable good-humour and buoyant elasticity of spirits, made and kept him such a favourite, that I believe Scott would have as soon ordered his dog to be hanged, as harboured, in his darkest hour of perplexity, the least thought of discarding "jocund Johnny."

The great bookseller of Edinburgh was a man of calibre infinitely beyond these Ballantynes. Though with a strong dash of the sanguine, without which, indeed, there can be no great projector in any walk of life, Archibald Constable was one of the most sagacious persons that ever followed his profession. A brother poet of Scott says to him, a year or two before this time, "Our butteraceous friend at the Cross turns out a deep drawwell;" and another eminent literator, still more closely connected with Constable, had already, I believe, christened him "The Crafty." Indeed, his fair and very handsome physiognomy carried a bland astuteness of expression, not to be mistaken by any who could read the plainest of nature's handwriting. He made no pretensions to literature—though he was in fact a tolerable judge of it generally, and particularly well skilled in the department of Scotch antiquities. He distrusted himself, however, in such matters, being conscious that his early education had been very imperfect; and moreover, he wisely considered the business of a critic as quite as much out of his "proper line" as authorship itself. But of that "proper line," and his own qualifications for it, his estimation was ample; and—often as I may have smiled at the lofty serenity of his self-complacence—I confess I now doubt whether he rated himself too highly as a master in the true science of the bookseller. He had, indeed, in his mercantile character, one deep and fatal flaw—for he hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the

most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet ; but for casting a keen eye over the remotest indications of popular taste—for anticipating the chances of success and failure in any given variety of adventure—for the planning and invention of his calling—he was not, in his own day at least, surpassed ; and among all his myriad of undertakings, I question if any one that really originated with himself, and continued to be superintended by his own care, ever did fail. He was as bold as far-sighted, and his disposition was as liberal as his views were wide. Had he and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other—had there been no third parties to step in, flattering an overweening vanity on the one hand into presumption, and on the other side spurring the enterprise that wanted nothing but a bridle, I have no doubt their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity. But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable ; and though he too had a liking for them both personally—esteemed James’s literary tact, and was far too much of a humourist not to be very fond of the younger brother’s company—he could never away with the feeling that they intervened unnecessarily, and left him but the shadow where he ought to have had the substantial lion’s share of confidence. On his part, again, he was too proud a man to give entire confidence where that was withheld from himself ; and more especially, I can well believe that a frankness of communication as to the real amount of his capital and general engagements of business, which would have been the reverse of painful to him in habitually confidential intercourse with Scott, was out of the question where Scott’s proposals and suggestions were to be met in conference, not with his own manly simplicity, but the buckram pomposity of the one, or the burlesque levity of the other of his plenipotentiaries.

The disputes in question seem to have begun very shortly after the contract for the Life and Edition of Swift had been completed ; and we shall presently see reason to infer that Scott, to a certain degree, was influenced at the moment by a soreness originating in the recent conduct of Mr. Jeffrey’s journal, that great primary source of the wealth and authority of the house of Constable. The then comparatively little-known booky seller of London, who was destined to be ultimately Constable’s really formidable rival in more than one department of publishing, has told me that when he read the article on Marmion, and another on general politics, in the same number of the Edinburgh Review, he said to himself, “Walter Scott has feelings, both as a gentleman and a Tory, which these people must now have wounded. The alliance between him and the whole clique of the Edinburgh Review, its proprietor included, is shaken ;” and, as far at least as the political part of the affair was concerned, John Murray’s sagacity was not at fault. We have seen with what thankful alacrity he accepted a small share in the adventure of Marmion, and with what brilliant success that was crowned. Nor is it wonderful that a young bookseller, conscious of ample energies, should now have watched with eagerness the circumstances which seemed not unlikely to place within his own reach a more intimate connection with the first great living author in whose works he had ever had any direct interest. He forthwith took measures for improving and extending his relations with James Ballan-

tyne, through whom, as he guessed, Scott could best be approached. His tenders of employment for the Canongate press were such that the apparent head of the firm proposed a conference at Ferrybridge, in Yorkshire; and there Murray, after detailing some of his own literary plans—particularly that already alluded to, of a *Novelist's Library*—in his turn sounded Ballantyne so far, as to resolve at once on pursuing his journey into Scotland. Ballantyne had said enough to satisfy him that the project of setting up a new publishing house in Edinburgh, in opposition to Constable, was already all but matured; and he, on the instant, proposed himself for its active co-operator in the metropolis. Ballantyne proceeded to open his budget further, mentioning, among other things, that the author of *Marmion* had “both another Scotch poem and a *Scotch novel* on the stocks;” and had, moreover, chalked out the design of an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted in opposition to the politics and criticism of Constable's review. These tidings might have been enough to make Murray proceed farther northwards; but there was a scheme of his own which had for some time deeply occupied his mind, and the last article of this communication determined him to embrace the opportunity of opening it in person at Ashestiel. He arrived there about the middle of October. The twenty-sixth number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr. Brougham's celebrated article, entitled, “Don Cevallos on the Usurpation of Spain,” had just been published; and one of the first things Scott mentioned in conversation was, that he had so highly resented the tone of that essay, as to give orders that his name might be discontinued on the list of subscribers.\* Mr. Murray could not have wished better auspices for the matter he had come to open; and, shortly after his departure, Scott writes as follows, to his prime political confidant:—

*To George Ellis, Esq., Claremont.*

“DEAR ELLIS,—

“Ashestiel, Nov. 2nd, 1808.

“We had, equally to our joy and surprise, a flying visit from Heber, about three weeks ago. He stayed but three days, but, between old stories and new, we made them very merry in their passage. During his stay, John Murray, the bookseller in Fleet Street, who has more real knowledge of what concerns his business than any of his brethren—at least than any of them that I know—came to canvass a most important plan, of which I am now, in ‘dern privacie,’ to give you the outline. I had most strongly recommended to our Lord Advocate† to think of some counter measures against the Edinburgh Review, which, politically speaking, is doing incalculable damage. I do not mean this in a mere party view;—the present Ministry are not all that I could wish them, for (Canning excepted) I doubt there is among them too much *self-seeking*, as it was called in Cromwell's time; and what is their misfortune, if not

\* “When the twenty-sixth number appeared, Mr. Scott wrote to Constable in these terms:—‘The Edinburgh Review *had* become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it.—*Now*, it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it.’ The list of the then subscribers exhibits in an indignant dash of Constable's pen opposite Mr. Scott's name, the word—‘STOP!’”—*Letter from Mr. R. Cadell.*

†The Right Hon. John Campbell Colquhoun, husband of Scott's early friend, Mary Anne Erskine.

their fault, there is not among them one in the decided situation of paramount authority, both with respect to the others and to the Crown, which is, I think, necessary, at least in difficult times, to produce promptitude, regularity, and efficiency in measures of importance. But their political principles are sound English principles, and, compared to the greedy and inefficient horde which preceded them, they are angels of light and of purity. It is obvious, however, that they want defenders both in and out of doors. Pitt's

"—'Love and fear glued many friends to him;  
And now he's fallen, those tough commixtures melt.'

"Were this only to effect a change of hands, I should expect it with more indifference, but I fear a change of principles is designed. The Edinburgh Review tells you coolly, 'We foresee a speedy revolution in this country as well as Mr. Cobbett;' and, to say the truth, by degrading the person of the Sovereign—exalting the power of the French armies, and the wisdom of their counsels—holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating prostration of our honour) is indispensable to the very existence of this country—I think, that for these two years past, they have done their utmost to hasten the accomplishment of their own prophecy. Of this work 9,000 copies are printed quarterly, and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with. Consider, of the numbers who read this work, how many are there likely to separate the literature from the politics—how many youths are there upon whose minds the flashy and bold character of the work is likely to make an indelible impression; and think what the consequence is likely to be.

"Now, I think there is balm in Gilead for all this; and that the cure lies in instituting such a review in London as should be conducted totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional. Accordingly, I have been given to understand that Mr. William Gifford is willing to become the conductor of such a work, and I have written to him, at the Lord Advocate's desire, a very voluminous letter on the subject. Now, should this plan succeed, you must hang your birding-piece on its hooks, take down your old Anti-Jacobin armour, and 'remember your swashing blow.' It is not that I think this projected review ought to be exclusively or principally political; this would, in my opinion, absolutely counteract its purpose, which I think should be to offer to those who love their country, and to those whom we would wish to love it, a periodical work of criticism conducted with equal talent, but upon sounder principle than that which has gained so high a station in the world of letters. Is not this very possible? In point of learning, you Englishmen have ten times our scholarship; and as for talent and genius, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than any of the rivers in Israel?' Have we not yourself and your cousin, the Roses, Malthus, Matthias, Gifford, Heber, and his brother? Can I not procure you a score of blue-caps who would rather write for us than for the Edinburgh Review, if they

got as much pay for it? 'A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, excellent friends!'

"Heber's fear was lest we should fail in procuring regular steady contributors; but I know so much of the interior discipline of reviewing, as to have no apprehension of that. Provided we are once set a-going by a few dashing numbers, there would be no fear of enlisting regular contributors; but the amateurs must bestir themselves in the first instance. From Government we should be entitled to expect confidential communication as to points of fact (so far as fit to be made public) in our political disquisitions. With this advantage, our good cause and St. George to boot, we may at least divide the field with our formidable competitors, who, after all, are much better at cutting than parrying, and whom uninterrupted triumph has as much unfitted for resisting a serious attack as it has done Buonaparte for the Spanish War. Jeffrey is, to be sure, a man of most uncommon versatility of talent; but what then?

"General Howe is a gallant commander,—  
There are others as gallant as he.'

"Think of all this, and let me hear from you very soon on the subject. Canning is, I have good reason to know, very anxious about the plan. I mentioned it to Robert Dundas, who was here with his lady for two days on a pilgrimage to Melrose, and he approved highly of it. Though no literary man, he is judicious, *clairvoyant*, and uncommonly sound-headed, like his father, Lord Melville. With the exceptions I have mentioned, the thing continues a secret."

The readiness with which Mr. Ellis entered into the scheme thus introduced to his notice, encouraged Scott to write still more fully; indeed, I might fill half a volume with the correspondence now before me concerning the gradual organization and ultimately successful establishment of the Quarterly Review.

I suspect that the preparations for the new journal did not long escape the notice of either the editor or the publishers of the Edinburgh Review. On receiving the celebrated *Declaration of Westminster* on the subject of the Spanish War, which bears date 15th December, 1808, Scott says to Ellis—"I cannot help writing a few lines to congratulate you on the royal declaration. I suspect by this time the author is at Claremont,\* for if I mistake not egregiously, this spirited composition, as we say in Scotland, fathers itself in the manliness of its style. It has appeared, too, at a most fortunate time, when neither friend nor foe can impute it to temporary motives. Tell Mr. Canning that the old women of Scotland will defend the country with their distaffs, rather than that troops enough be not sent to make good so noble a pledge. Were the thousands that have mouldered away in petty conquests or Lilliputian expeditions united to those we now have in that country, what a band would Moore have under him! . . . Jeffrey has offered terms of pacification, engaging that no party politics should again appear in his review. I

\* Scott's friend had mentioned that he expected a visit from Mr. Canning, at Claremont, in Surrey; which beautiful seat continued in the possession of the Ellis family, until it was purchased by the Crown, on the marriage of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, in 1816

told him I thought it was now too late, and reminded him that I had often pointed out to him the consequences of letting his work become a party tool. He said 'he did not care for the consequences—there were but four men he feared as opponents.'—'Who were these?'—'Yourself for one.'—'Certainly you pay me a great compliment; depend upon it I will endeavour to deserve it.'—'Why, you would not join against me?'—'Yes I would, if I saw a proper opportunity: not against you personally, but against your politics.'—'You are privileged to be violent.'—'I don't ask any privilege for undue violence. But who are your other foemen?'—'George Ellis and Southey.' The fourth he did not name. All this was in great good-humour; and next day I had a very affecting note from him, in answer to an invitation to dinner. He has no suspicion of the review whatever; but I thought I could not handsomely suffer him to infer that I would be influenced by those private feelings respecting him, which, on more than one occasion, he has laid aside when I was personally concerned."

As to Messrs. Constable and Co., it is not to be supposed that the rumours of the rival journal would tend to soothe those disagreeable feelings between them and Scott, of which I can trace the existence several months beyond the date of Mr. Murray's arrival at Ashiestiel. Something seems to have occurred before the end of 1808 which induced Scott to suspect that, among other sources of uneasiness, had been a repentant grudge in the minds of those booksellers as to their bargain about the new edition of Swift; and on the 2nd of January, 1809, I find him requesting that if, on reflection, they thought they had hastily committed themselves, the deed might be forthwith cancelled. On the 11th of the same month, Messrs. Constable reply as follows:—

*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"SIR,—

"We are anxious to assure you that we feel no dissatisfaction at any part of our bargain about Swift. Viewing it as a safe and respectable speculation, we should be very sorry to agree to your relinquishing the undertaking, and indeed rely with confidence on its proceeding as originally arranged. We regret that you have not been more willing to overlook the unguarded expression of our Mr. Hunter about which you complain. We are very much concerned that any circumstance should have occurred that should thus interrupt our friendly intercourse; but as we are not willing to believe that we have done anything which should prevent our being again friends, we may at least be permitted to express a hope that matters may hereafter be restored to their old footing between us, when the misrepresentations of interested persons may cease to be remembered. At any rate, you will always find us what we trust we have ever been, sir, your faithful servants,

"A. CONSTABLE & Co."

Scott answers:—

*To Messrs. Constable and Co.*

"Edinburgh, 12th January, 1802.

"GENTLEMEN,—

"To resume, for the last time, the disagreeable subject of our difference, I must remind you of what I told Mr. Constable personally, that no *single*

*unguarded expression*, much less the misrepresentation of any person whatever, would have influenced me to quarrel with any of my friends. But if Mr. Hunter will take the trouble to recollect the general opinion he has expressed of my undertakings, and of my ability to execute them, upon many occasions during the last five months, and his whole conduct in the bargain about Swift, I think he ought to be the last to wish his interest compromised on my account. I am only happy the breach has taken place before there was any real loss to complain of, for although I have had my share of popularity, I cannot expect it to be more lasting than that of those who have lost it after deserving it much better.

"In the present circumstances, I have only a parting favour to request of your house, which is, that the portrait for which I sat to Raeburn shall be considered as done at my debit, and for myself. It shall be, of course, forthcoming for the fulfilment of any engagement you may have made about engraving, if such exists. Sadler will now be soon out, when we will have a settlement of our accounts. I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

"WALTER SCOTT."

Mr. Constable declined, in very handsome terms, to give up the picture. But for the present the breach was complete.

One word as to the harsh language in which Constable's then partner is mentioned in several of the preceding letters. This Mr. Hunter was, I am told by friends of mine who knew him well, a man of considerable intelligence and accomplishments, to whose personal connexions and weight in society the house of Constable and Co. owed a great accession of business and influence. He was, however, a very keen politician; regarded Scott's Toryism with a fixed bitterness; and, moreover, could never conceal his impression that Scott ought to have embarked in no other literary undertakings whatever until he had completed his edition of Swift. It is not wonderful that, not having been bred regularly to the bookselling business, he should have somewhat misapprehended the obligation which Scott had incurred when the bargain for that work was made; and his feeling of his own station and consequence was no doubt such as to give his style of conversation on doubtful questions of business, a tone for which Scott had not been prepared by his previous intercourse with Mr. Constable. The defection of the poet was, however, at once regretted and resented by both these partners, and Constable, I am told, often vented his wrath in figures as lofty as Scott's own. "Ay," he would say, stamping on the ground with a savage smile, "ay, there is such a thing as rearing the oak until it can support itself."

All this leads us to the second stage, one still more unwise and unfortunate than the first, in the history of Scott's commercial connection with the Ballantynes. The scheme of starting a new bookselling house in Edinburgh, begun in the shortsighted heat of pique, had now been matured,—I cannot add, either with composed observation or rational forecast—for it was ultimately settled that the ostensible and chief managing partner should be a person without capital, and neither by training nor by temper in the smallest degree qualified for such a situation; more especially where the field was to be taken against long experience, consummate skill, and resources which, if not so large as all

the world supposed them, were still in comparison vast, and admirably organized. The rash resolution was, however, carried into effect, and a deed, deposited, for secrecy's sake, in the hands of Scott, bound him as one-third partner, James Ballantyne having also a share, in this firm of John Ballantyne and Co., booksellers, Edinburgh.—“*Rigdumfunnidos*” was installed in Hanover Street as the avowed rival of “The Crafty.”

The existing bond of copartnership is dated in July, 1809; but I suspect this had been a revised edition. It is certain that the new house were openly mustering their forces some weeks before Scott desired to withdraw his Swift from the hands of the old one in January. This appears from several of the letters that passed between him and Ellis while Gifford was arranging the materials for the first number of the Quarterly Review, and also between him and his friend Southey, to whom, perhaps, more than any other single writer, that journal owed its ultimate success.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SCOTT IN LONDON—EXCURSION TO TROSSACHS—ANECDOTES— PUBLICATION OF LADY OF THE LAKE—ANECDOTES.

IN the course of February, Mr. John Ballantyne had proceeded to London, for the purpose of introducing himself to the chief publishers there in his new capacity, and especially of taking Mr. Murray's instructions respecting the Scotch management of the Quarterly Review. As soon as the spring vacation began, Scott followed him by sea. He might naturally have wished to be at hand while his new partner was forming arrangements on which so much must depend; but some circumstances in the procedure of the Scotch Law Commission had made the Lord Advocate request his presence at this time in town. There he and Mrs. Scott took up their quarters, as usual, under the roof of their kind old friends the Dumergues; while their eldest girl enjoyed the advantage of being domesticated with the Miss Baillies at Hampstead. They stayed more than two months, and this being his first visit to town since his fame had been crowned by Marmion, he was of course more than ever the object of general curiosity and attention. Mr. Morritt saw much of him, both at his own house in Portland Place and elsewhere, and I transcribe a few sentences from his *memoranda* of the period.

"Scott," his friend says, "more correctly than any other man I ever knew, appreciated the value of that apparently enthusiastic *engouement* which the world of London shows to the fashionable wonder of the year. During this sojourn of 1809, the homage paid him would have turned the head of any less gifted man of eminence. It neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in its own coin. 'All this is very flattering,' he would say, 'and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.' If he dined with us and found any new faces, 'Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?' was his usual question: 'I will roar if you like it to your heart's content.' He would, indeed, in such cases put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment, and day after day surprised me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted, 'yet know that I one Snug the joiner am—no lion fierce,' &c., and was at once himself again.

"He often lamented the injurious effects for literature and genius resulting from the influence of London celebrity on weaker minds,

especially in the excitement of ambition for this subordinate and ephemeral *reputation du salon*. 'It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,' he said, 'but it never yet led to a port that I should like to anchor in ;' nor did he willingly endure, either in London or in Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities.

"One story which I heard of him from Dr. Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury (for I was not present), was very characteristic. The doctor was one of a grand congregation of lions, where Scott and Coleridge, *cum multis aliis*, attended at Sotheby's. Poets and poetry were the topics of the table, and there was plentiful recitation of effusions as yet unpublished, which of course obtained abundant applause. Coleridge repeated more than one, which, as Dr. H. thought, were eulogized by some of the company with something like affectation, and a desire to humble Scott by raising a poet of inferior reputation on his shoulders. Scott, however, joined in the compliments as cordially as anybody, until, in his turn, he was invited to display some of his occasional poetry, much of which he must, no doubt, have written. Scott said he had published so much, he had nothing of his own left that he could think worth their hearing, but he would repeat a little copy of verses which he had shortly before seen in a provincial newspaper, and which seemed to him almost as good as anything they had been listening to with so much pleasure. He repeated the stanzas now so well known of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.' The applauses that ensued were faint—then came slight criticisms, from which Scott defended the unknown author. At last, a more bitter antagonist opened, and fastening upon one line, cried, 'This at least is absolute nonsense.' Scott denied the charge; the Zoilus persisted—until Coleridge, out of all patience, exclaimed, 'For God's sake let Mr. Scott alone—I wrote the poem.' This exposition of the real worth of dinner criticism can hardly be excelled.

"He often complained of the real dulness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied and tacit obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. 'If,' he said, 'I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them.' He was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted in them,—as indeed who did not?—but he loved to study eminence of every class and sort, and his rising fame gave him easy access to gratify all his curiosity."

The meetings with Canning, Croker, and Ellis, to which Mr. Morritt alludes, were, as may be supposed, chiefly occupied with the affairs of the Quarterly Review. The first number of that journal appeared while Scott was in London; it contained three articles from his pen—namely, one on the Reliques of Burns; another on the Chronicle of the Cid; and a third on Sir John Carr's Tour through Scotland. His conferences with the editor and publisher were frequent, and the latter certainly contemplated, at this time, a most close and intimate connection with him, not only as a reviewer, but an author, and, consequently, with both the concerns of the Messrs. Ballantyne. Scott continued for some time

to be a very active contributor to the Quarterly Review—nor, indeed, was his connection with it ever entirely suspended. But John Ballantyne transacted business in a fashion which soon cooled, and in no very long time dissolved, the general “alliance offensive and defensive” with Murray, which Scott had announced before leaving Edinburgh to both Southey and Ellis.

On his return northwards he spent a fortnight in Yorkshire with Mr. Morritt; but his correspondence shows the lively impression made on him by his first view of Rokeby.

I should have mentioned sooner the death of Camp, the first of not a few dogs whose names will be “freshly remembered” as long as their master’s works are popular. This favourite began to droop early in 1808, and became incapable of accompanying Scott in his rides, but he preserved his affection and sagacity to the last. At Ashestiel, as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner, he would address the dog lying on his mat by the fire, and say, “Camp, my good fellow, the Sheriff’s coming home by the ford, or by the hill;” and the sick animal would immediately bestir himself to welcome his master, going out at the back door or the front door, according to the direction given, and advancing as far as he was able, either towards the ford of the Tweed, or the bridge over the Glenkinnon Burn beyond Laird Nippy’s gate. He died about January, 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night, in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street, immediately opposite to the window at which Scott usually sat writing. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family standing in tears about the grave, as her father himself smoothed down the turf above Camp with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized on account of “the death of a dear old friend;” and Mr. Macdonald Buchanan was not at all surprised that he should have done so, when it came out next morning that Camp was no more.

Before fixing himself at Ashestiel for the autumn, Scott had undertaken to have a third poem ready for publication, by John Ballantyne, by the end of the year, and probably made some progress in the composition of the *Lady of the Lake*. On the rising of the Court in July, he went, accompanied by Mrs. Scott and his eldest daughter, to revisit the localities, so dear to him in the days of his juvenile rambling, which he had chosen for the scene of his fable. He gave a week to his old friends at Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman, well mounted, might gallop from the shore of Loch Vennachar to the rock of Stirling within the space allotted for that purpose to Fitz-James. From Cambusmore the party proceeded to Ross Priory, and, under the guidance of Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, explored the islands of Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred desperate conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine. At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Scott’s friends, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, were then visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them there, and read to them the *Stag Chase*, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci*.

It was on this occasion, at Buchanan House, that he first saw Lord Byron’s English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.

Addressing (August 7, 1809) Southey in whose behalf he had been interceding with Mr. Canning, he says:—"By the way, is the ancient \* \* \* \*, whose decease is to open our quest, thinking of a better world? I only ask because about three years ago I accepted the office I hold in the Court of Session, the revenue to accrue to me only on the death of the old incumbent. But my friend has since taken out a new lease of life, and unless I get some Border lad to cut his throat, may, for aught I know, live as long as I shall;—such odious deceivers are these invalids. Mine reminds me of Sindbad's Old Man of the Sea, and will certainly throttle me if I can't somehow dismount him. If I were once in possession of my reversionary income, I would, like you, bid farewell to the drudgery of literature, and do nothing but what I pleased, which might be another phrase for doing very little. I was always an admirer of the modest wish of a retainer in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays—

"I would not be a serving man  
To carry the cloak-bag still,  
Nor would I be a falconer,  
The greedy hawks to fill;  
But I would live in a good house,  
And have a good master too,  
And I would eat and drink of the best,  
And no work would I do."

"In the meantime, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living with my pen. God help the bear if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5,000 a year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success. Adieu, my dear friend. I shall be impatient to hear how your matters fadge."

In a letter to Ellis, dated "Ashestiel, September 14th," he writes:—

"As an excuse for my own indolence, I have been in the Highlands for some time past; and who should I meet there, of all fowls in the air, but your friend Mr. Blackburn, to whom I was so much obliged for the care he took of my late unfortunate relative, at your friendly request. The recognition was unfortunately made just when I was leaving the country, and as he was in a gig, and I on the driving-seat of a carriage, the place of meeting a narrow Highland road, which looked as if forty patent ploughs had furrowed it, we had not time or space for so long a greeting as we could have wished. He has a capital good house on the banks of the Leven, about three miles below its discharge from the lake, and very near the classical spot where Matthew Bramble and his whole family were conducted by Smollett, and where Smollett himself was born. There is a new inducement for you to come to Caledon. Your health, thank God, is now no impediment, and I am told, sugar and rum excel even whiskey, so your purse must be proportionally distended."

The unfortunate brother, the blot of the family, to whom Scott alludes in this letter, had disappointed all the hopes under which his friends sent

him to Jamaica. It may be remarked, as characteristic of Scott at this time, that in the various letters to Ellis concerning Daniel, he speaks of him as his *relation*, never as his *brother*; and it must also be mentioned as a circumstance suggesting that Daniel had retained, after all, some sense of pride, that his West Indian patron was allowed by himself to remain, to the end of their connection, in ignorance of what his distinguished brother had thus thought fit to suppress. Mr. Blackburn, in fact, never knew that Daniel was Walter Scott's brother, until he was applied to for some information respecting him on my own behalf, after this narrative was begun. The story is shortly, that the adventurer's habits of dissipation proved incurable; but he finally left Jamaica under a stigma which Walter Scott regarded with utter severity. Being employed in some service against a refractory or insurgent body of negroes, he had exhibited a lamentable deficiency of spirit and conduct. He returned to Scotland a dishonoured man, and though he found shelter and compassion from his mother, his brother would never see him again. Nay, when soon after his health, shattered by dissolute indulgence, and probably the intolerable load of shame, gave way altogether, and he died as yet a young man, the poet refused either to attend his funeral or to wear mourning for him like the rest of the family. Thus sternly, when in the height and pride of his blood, could Scott, whose heart was never hardened against the distress of an enemy, recoil from the disgrace of a brother. It is a more pleasing part of my duty to add, that he spoke to me, twenty years afterwards, in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on this occasion. I must add, moreover, that he took a warm interest in a natural child whom Daniel had bequeathed to his mother's care; and after the old lady's death, religiously supplied her place as the boy's protector.

About this time the edition of Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, &c. (3 vols. royal 4to) was at length completed by Scott, and published by Constable; but the letters which passed between the editor and the bookseller show that their personal estrangement had as yet undergone slender alteration. The collection of the Sadler papers was chiefly the work of Mr. Arthur Clifford—but Scott drew up the Memoir and Notes, and superintended the printing. His account of the Life of Sadler\* extends to thirty pages; and both it and his notes are written with all that lively solicitude about points of antiquarian detail which accompanied him through so many tasks less attractive than the personal career of a distinguished statesman intimately connected with the fortunes of Mary Queen of Scots. Some volumes of the edition of Somers's Tracts (which he had undertaken for Mr. Miller and other booksellers of London two or three years before) were also published about the same period; but that compilation was not finished (13 vols. royal 4to) until 1812. His part in it (for which the booksellers paid him 1,300 guineas) was diligently performed, and shows abundant traces of his sagacious understanding and graceful expression. His editorial labours on Dryden, Swift, and these other collections, were gradually storing his mind with that minute and accurate knowledge of the leading persons and events both of Scotch and

\* Republished in the Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv.

English history, which made his conversation on such subjects that of one who had rather lived with than read about the departed ; while, unlike other antiquaries, he always preserved the keenest interest in the transactions of his own time.

Scott had from his boyish days a great love of theatrical representation ; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practise extended hospitality, the chief actors of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, were among the most acceptable of his guests. Mr. Charles Young was, I believe, the first of them of whom he saw much. As early as 1803 I find him writing of that gentleman to the Marchioness of Abercorn as a valuable addition to the society of Edinburgh ; and down to the end of Scott's life Mr. Young was never in the North without visiting him.

Another graceful and intelligent performer in whom he took a special interest, and of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle, was Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs. Bartley. But at the period of which I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with John Philip Kemble, and his sister Mrs. Siddons, both of whom he appears to have often met at Lord Abercorn's villa near Stanmore, during his spring visits to London after the first establishment of his poetical celebrity. Of John Kemble's personal character and manners, he has recorded his impressions in a pleasing reviewal of Mr. Boaden's Memoir.\* The great tragedian's love of black-letter learning, especially of dramatic antiquities, afforded a strong bond of fellowship ; and I have heard Scott say that the only man who ever seduced him into very deep potations in his middle life was Kemble. He was frequently at Ashiestiel, and the "fat Scotch butler," whom Mr. Skene has described to us, by name *John Macbeth*, made sore complaints of the bad hours kept on such occasions in one of the most regular of households ; but the watchings of the night were not more grievous to "Cousin Macbeth," as Kemble called the honest *beaufetier*, than were the hazards and fatigues of the morning to the representative of the Scotch usurper. Kemble's miseries during a rough gallop were quite as grotesque as those of his namesake, and it must be owned that species of distress was one from the contemplation of which his host could never derive anything but amusement.

I have heard Scott chuckle with particular glee over the recollection of an excursion to the Vale of the Ettrick, near which river the party were pursued by a bull. "Come, King John," said he, "we must even take the water," and accordingly he and his daughter plunged into the stream. But King John, halting on the bank and surveying the river, which happened to be full and turbid, exclaimed ; in his usual solemn manner—

—"The flood is angry, Sheriff,  
Methinks I'll get me up into a tree."†

It was well that the dogs had succeeded in diverting the bull, because

\* Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. xx.

† John Kemble's most familiar table-talk often flowed into blank verse ; and so indeed did his sister's. Scott (who was a capital mimic) often repeated her tragical exclamation to a footboy during a dinner at Ashiestiel :

"You've brought me water, boy,—I asked for beer."

there was no tree at hand which could have sustained King John, nor, had that been otherwise, could so stately a personage have dismounted and ascended with such alacrity as circumstances would have required. He at length followed his friends through the river with the rueful dignity of Don Quixote.

It was this intercourse which led Scott to exert himself very strenuously, when some change in the administration of the Edinburgh stage became necessary (I believe in 1808), to prevail on Mr. Henry Siddons, the nephew of Kemble, to undertake the lease and management. Such an arrangement would, he expected, induce both Kemble and his sister to be more in Scotland than hitherto; and what he had seen of young Siddons himself led him to prognosticate a great improvement in the whole conduct of the northern stage. His wishes were at length accomplished in the summer of 1809. On this occasion he purchased a share, and became one of the acting trustees for the general body of proprietors; and thenceforth, during a long series of years, he continued to take a very lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh company. In this he was plentifully encouraged by his domestic *camarilla*; for his wife had all a Frenchwoman's passion for the *spectacle*; and the elder of the two Ballantynes (both equally devoted to the company of players) was a regular newspaper critic of theatrical affairs, and in that capacity had already attained a measure of authority supremely gratifying to himself.

The first new play produced by Henry Siddons was the *Family Legend* of Joanna Baillie. This was, I believe, the first of her dramas that ever underwent the test of representation in her native kingdom; and Scott appears to have exerted himself most indefatigably in its behalf. He was consulted about all the *minutiae* of costume, attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue. The play was better received than any other which the gifted authoress has since subjected to the same experiment; and how ardently Scott enjoyed its success will appear from a few specimens of the many letters which he addressed to his friend on the occasion.

The first of these letters is dated Edinburgh, October 27, 1809. He had gone into town for the purpose of entering his eldest boy at the High School.

"On receiving your long kind letter yesterday, I sought out Siddons, who was equally surprised and delighted at your liberal arrangement about the *Lady of the Rock*. I will put all the names to rights, and retain enough of locality and personality to please the antiquary, without the least risk of bringing the clan Gillian about our ears. I went through the theatre, which is the most complete little thing of the kind I ever saw, elegantly fitted up, and large enough for every purpose. I trust, with you, that in this as in other cases, our Scotch poverty may be a counterbalance to our Scotch pride, and that we shall not need in my time a larger or more expensive building. Siddons himself observes, that even for the purposes of show (so paramount now-a-days) a moderate stage is better fitted than a large one, because the machinery is pliable and manageable in proportion to its size. With regard to the equipment of the *Family Legend*, I have been much diverted with a discovery which

I have made. I had occasion to visit our Lord Provost (by profession a stocking-weaver),\* and was surprised to find the worthy magistrate filled with a new-born zeal for the drama. He spoke of Mr. Siddons's merits with enthusiasm, and of Miss Baillie's powers almost with tears of rapture. Being a curious investigator of cause and effect, I never rested until I found out that this theatric rage, which had seized his lordship of a sudden, was owing to a large order for hose, pantaloons, and plaids for equipping the rival clans of Campbell and Maclean, for which Siddons was sensible enough to send to the warehouse of our excellent provost. . . . The Laird † is just gone to the High School, and it is with inexpressible feeling that I hear him trying to babble the first words of Latin, the signal of commencing serious study, for his acquirements hitherto have been under the mild dominion of a governess. I felt very like Leontes—

“ Looking on the lines  
Of my boy's face, methought I did recall  
Thirty good years ”—

And oh, my dear Miss Baillie, what a tale thirty years can tell even in an uniform and unhazardous course of life ! How much I have reaped that I have never sown, and sown that I have never reaped ! Always, I shall think it one of the proudest and happiest circumstances of my life that enables me to subscribe myself your faithful and affectionate friend,  
“ W. S.”

The Family Legend had a continuous run of fourteen nights, and was soon afterwards printed and published by the Ballantynes.

Its theatrical critic was the elder of those brothers ; the newspaper in which his lucubrations then appeared was the Edinburgh Evening Courant ; and so it continued until 1817, when the Edinburgh Weekly Journal was purchased by the printing company in the Canongate ; ever after which period it was edited by the prominent member of that firm, and from time to time was the vehicle of many fugitive pieces by the unseen partner.

In one of these letters there occurs, for the first time, the name of a person who soon obtained a large share of Scott's regard and confidence—the late ingenious comedian, Mr. Daniel Terry. He had received a good education and been regularly trained as an architect, but abandoned that profession, at an early period of life, for the stage, and was now beginning to attract attention as a valuable and efficient actor in Henry Siddons's new company at Edinburgh. Already he and the Ballantynes were constant companions, and through his familiarity with them, Scott had

\* This magistrate was Mr. William Coulter, who died in office in April, 1810, and is said to have been greatly consoled on his death-bed by the prospect of so grand a funeral as must needs occur in the case of an actual Lord Provost of Auld Reekie. Scott used to *take him off* as saying at some public meeting, “ Gentlemen, though doomed to the trade of a stocking-weaver, I was born with the soul of a *Sheepie* ! ”—(Scipio).

† Young Walter Scott was called Gilnockie, the Laird of Gilnockie, or simply *the Laird*, in consequence of his childish admiration for Johnnie Armstrong, whose ruined tower is still extant at Gilnockie on the Esk, nearly opposite Netherby.

abundant opportunities of appreciating his many excellent and agreeable qualities. He had the manners and feelings of a gentleman. Like John Kemble, he was deeply skilled in the old literature of the drama, and he rivalled Scott's own enthusiasm for the antiquities of *virtu*. Their epistolary correspondence in after days was frequent, and will supply me with many illustrations of Scott's minor tastes and habits. As their letters lie before me, they appear as if they had all been penned by the same hand. Terry's idolatry of his new friend induced him to imitate his writing so zealously, that Scott used to say, if he were called on to swear to any document, the utmost he could venture to attest would be, that it was either in his own hand or in Terry's. The actor, perhaps unconsciously, mimicked him in other matters with hardly inferior pertinacity. His small lively features had acquired, before I knew him, a truly ludicrous cast of Scott's graver expression; he had taught his tiny eyebrow the very trick of the poet's meditative frown; and to crown all, he so habitually affected his tone and accent that, though a native of Bath, a stranger could hardly have doubted he must be a Scotchman. These things afforded Scott and all their mutual acquaintances much diversion; but perhaps no Stoic could have helped being secretly gratified by seeing a clever and sensible man convert himself into a living type and symbol of admiration.

Charles Mathews and Terry were once thrown out of a gig together, and the former received an injury which made him halt ever afterwards, while the latter escaped unhurt. "Dooms, *Damniel*," said Mathews when they next met, "what a pity that it wasna your luck to get the game leg, mon! Your *Shurra* wad hae been the very thing, ye ken, an' ye wad hae been croose till ye war coffined." Terry, though he did not always relish bantering on this subject, replied readily and good-humouredly by a quotation from Peter Pindar's *Bosny and Pionzi*:—

"When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,  
Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,  
Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,  
He'll take off Peter better now than ever."

Mathews's mirthful caricature of Terry's sober mimicry of Scott was one of the richest extravaganzas of his social hours; but indeed I have often seen this Proteus dramatize the whole Ballantyne group with equal success—while *Rigdumfunnidos* screamed with delight, and *Aldiboron-tiphoscophornio* faintly chuckled, and the Sheriff, gently smiling, pushed round his decanters.

Miss Seward died in March, 1809. She bequeathed her poetry to Scott, with an injunction to publish it speedily, and prefix a sketch of her life; while she made her letters (of which she had kept copies) the property of Mr. Constable, in the assurance that due regard for his own interests would forthwith place the whole collection before the admiring world. Scott superintended accordingly the edition of the lady's verses, which was published in three volumes in August, 1810, by John Ballantyne and Co.; and Constable lost no time in announcing her correspondence, which appeared a year later, in six volumes.

There occurred, while the latter cantos of the *Lady of the Lake* were

advancing through the press, an affair which gave Scott so much uneasiness, that I must not pass it in silence. Each Clerk of Session had in those days the charge of a particular office or department in the Great Register House of Scotland, and the appointment of the subalterns, who therein recorded and extracted the decrees of the Supreme Court, was in his hands. Some of these situations, remunerated, according to a fixed rate of fees, by the parties concerned in the suits before the Court, were valuable, and considered not at all below the pretensions of gentlemen who had been regularly trained for the higher branches of the law. About the time when Thomas Scott's affairs as a Writer to the Signet fell into derangement, but before they were yet hopeless, a post became vacant in his brother's office, which yielded an average income of £400, and which he would very willingly have accepted. The poet, however, considered a respectable man, who had grown grey at an inferior desk in the same department, as entitled to promotion, and exerted the right of patronage in his favour accordingly, bestowing on his brother the place which this person left. It was worth about £250 a year, and its duties being entirely mechanical, might be in great part, and often had been in former times entirely, discharged by deputy. Mr. Thomas Scott's appointment to this *Extractorship* took place at an early stage of the proceedings of that Commission for Inquiring into the Scotch System of Judicature, which had the poet for its secretary. Thomas very soon afterwards was compelled to withdraw from Edinburgh, and retired, as has been mentioned, to the Isle of Man, leaving his official duties to the care of a substitute, who was to allow him a certain share of the fees, until circumstances should permit his return. It was not, however, found so easy as he and his friends had anticipated, to wind up his accounts and settle with his creditors. Time passed on, and being an active man, in the prime vigour of life, he accepted a commission in the Manx Fencibles, a new corps raised by the lord of that island, the Duke of Athol, who willingly availed himself of the military experience which Scott had acquired in the course of his long connection with the Edinburgh volunteers. These Manx Fencibles, however, were soon dissolved, and Thomas Scott, now engaged in the peaceful occupation of collecting materials for a History of the Isle of Man, to which his brother had strongly directed his views, was anxiously expecting a final arrangement, which might allow him to re-establish himself in Edinburgh, and resume his seat in the Register House, when he received the intelligence that the Commission of Judicature had resolved to abolish that, among many other similar posts. This was a severe blow, but it was announced, at the same time, that the Commission meant to recommend to Parliament a scheme of compensation for the functionaries who were to be discharged at their suggestion, and that his retired allowance would probably amount to £130 per annum.

In the spring of 1810 the Commission gave in its report, and was dissolved, and a bill, embodying the details of an extensive reform founded on its suggestions, was laid before the House of Commons, who adopted most of its provisions, and among others passed, without hesitation, the clauses respecting compensation for the holders of abolished offices. But when the bill reached the House of Lords, several of these clauses were

severely reprobated by some Peers of the Whig party, and the case of Thomas Scott, in particular, was represented as a gross and flagrant job. The following extract from Hansard's Debates will save me the trouble of further details :—

“THOMAS SCOTT.

“The Earl of Lauderdale moved an amendment, ‘That those only be remunerated who were mentioned in the schedule. The application of this amendment was towards the compensation intended for Mr. Thomas Scott, the brother of Walter Scott. It appeared the former was appointed to the office of an Extractor at a time when it must have been foreseen that those offices would be abolished. Mr. Thomas Scott had not been connected previously with that sort of situation, but was recruiting for the Manx Fencibles in the Isle of Man at the time, and had not served the office, but performed its duties through the means of a deputy. He considered this transaction a perfect job. By the present bill, Mr. T. Scott would have £130 for life as an indemnity for an office the duties of which he never had performed, while those clerks who had laboured for twenty years had no adequate remuneration.

“Viscount Melville supported the general provisions of the bill. With respect to Mr. T. Scott, he certainly had been in business, had met with misfortunes, and on account of his circumstances went to the Isle of Man; but with respect to his appointment, this was the fact: a situation in the same office (of the Register House) with that of his brother, of £400, became vacant, and he (Walter Scott) thought it his duty to promote a person who had meritoriously filled the situation which was afterwards granted to Mr. T. Scott. His brother was therefore so disinterested as to have appointed him to the inferior instead of the superior situation. The noble viscount saw no injustice in the case, and there was no partiality but what was excusable.

“Lord Holland thought no man who knew him would suspect that he was unfavourable to men of literature; on the contrary, he felt a great esteem for the literary character of Walter Scott. He and his colleagues ever thought it their duty to reward literary merit without regard to political opinions; and he wished he could pay the same compliment to the noble and learned viscount, for he must ever recollect that the poet Burns, of immortal memory, had been shamefully neglected. But with respect to Mr. Thomas Scott, the question was quite different, for he was placed in a situation which he and his brother knew at the time would be abolished, and from Parliament he claimed an indemnity for what could not be pronounced any loss. It was unjust as regarded others, and improper as it respected Parliament.

“The amendment was then proposed and negatived. The bill was accordingly read the third time and passed.”—HANSARD, June, 1810.

I shall extract passages from Scott's letters to his brother, which will show what his feelings were while this affair continued under agitation.

“MY DEAR TOM,—

“I write under some anxiety for your interest, though I sincerely hope it is groundless. The devil or James Gibson has put it into Lord Lauderdale's head to challenge your annuity in the House of Lords on account of your non-residence, and your holding a commission in the militia. His lordship kept his intention as secret as possible, but fortunately it reached the kind and friendly ear of Colin Mackenzie. Lord Melville takes the matter up stoutly, and I have little doubt will carry his point, unless the whole bill is given up for the season, which some concurring opposition from different quarters renders not impossible. In

that case you must, at the expense of a little cash and time, show face in Edinburgh for a week or two, and attend your office. But I devoutly hope all will be settled by the bill being passed as it now stands. This is truly a most unworthy exertion of private spite and malice, but I trust it will be in vain."

\* \* \* \* \*

Edinburgh, June 12th.

"DEAR TOM,—

"I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have every reason to believe that the bill will pass this week. It has been *committed*; upon which occasion Lord Lauderdale stated various objections, all of which were repelled. He then adverted to your case with some sufficiently bitter observations. Lord Melville advised him to reserve his epithets till he was pleased to state his cause, as he would pledge himself to show that they were totally inapplicable to the transaction. The Duke of Montrose also intimated his intention to defend it, which I take very kind of his Grace, as he went down on purpose, and declared his resolution to attend whenever the business should be stirred. So much for

"The Lord of Graham, by every chief adored,  
Who boasts his native philabeg restored."\*

Edinburgh, 21st June, 1810.

"MY DEAR TOM,—

"The bill was read a third time in the House of Lords, on which occasion Lord Lauderdale made his attack, which Lord Melville answered. There was not much said on either side: Lord Holland supported Lord Lauderdale, and the bill passed without a division. So you have fairly doubled Cape Lauderdale. I believe his principal view was to insult my feelings, in which he has been very unsuccessful, for I thank God I feel nothing but the most hearty contempt both for the attack and the sort of paltry malice by which it alone could be dictated."

I conclude the affair of Thomas Scott with a brief extract from a letter which his brother addressed to him a few weeks later:—"Lord Holland has been in Edinburgh, and we met accidentally at a public party. He made up to me, but I remembered his part in your affair, and cut him with as little remorse as an old pen." The meeting here alluded to occurred at a dinner of the *Friday Club*, at Fortune's Tavern, to which Lord Holland was introduced by Mr. Thomas Thompson. Two gentlemen who were present, inform me that they distinctly remember a very painful scene, for which, knowing Scott's habitual good-nature and urbanity, they had been wholly unprepared. One of them (Lord Jeffrey) adds, that this was the only example of rudeness he ever witnessed in him in the course of a lifelong familiarity. I have thought it due to truth and justice not to omit this disagreeable passage in Scott's life, which shows how even his mind could at times be unhinged and perverted by the malign influence of political spleen. It is consolatory to add, that he enjoyed

\* These lines are slightly altered from the *Rolliad*, p. 308. The Duke had obtained the repeal of an Act of Parliament forbidding the use of the Highland garb.

much agreeable intercourse in after days with Lord Holland, and retained no feelings of resentment towards any other of the Whig gentlemen named in the preceding correspondence.

While these disagreeable affairs were still in progress, the poem of the Lady of the Lake was completed. Scott was at the same time arranging the materials, and superintending the printing, of the collection entitled English Minstrelsy, in which several of his own minor poems first appeared, and which John Ballantyne and Co. also published in the summer of 1810. The Swift, too (to say nothing of reviews and the like), was going on; and so was the Somers. A new edition of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border was moreover at press, and in it the editor included a few features of novelty, particularly Mr. Morritt's spirited ballad of the *Curse of Moy*.

Early in May the Lady of the Lake came out—as her two elder sisters had done—in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, and with, moreover, an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book, two guineas. For the copyright the poet had nominally received 2,000 guineas, but as John Ballantyne and Co. retained three-fourths of the property to themselves (Miller of London purchasing the other fourth), the author's profits were, or should have been, more than this.

It ought to be mentioned, that during the progress of the poem his feelings towards Constable were so much softened, that he authorized John Ballantyne to ask, in his name, that experienced bookseller's advice respecting the amount of the first impression, the method of advertising, and other professional details. Mr. Constable readily gave the assistance thus requested, and would willingly have taken any share they pleased in the adventure. The property had been disposed of before these communications occurred, and the triumphant success of the *coup d'essai* of the new firm was sufficient to close Scott's ears for a season against any propositions of the like kind from the house at the Cross; but from this time there was no return of anything like personal ill-will between the parties. One article of this correspondence will be sufficient.

*To Mr. Constable.*

“Castle Street, 13th March, 1810.

“DEAR SIR,—

“I am sure if Mr. Hunter is really sorry for the occasion of my long absence from your shop, I shall be happy to forget all disagreeable circumstances, and visit it often as a customer and amateur. I think it necessary to add (before departing from this subject, and I hope for ever), that it is not in my power to restore our relative situation as author and publishers, because, upon the breach between us, a large capital was diverted by the Ballantynes from another object, and invested in their present book-selling concern, under an express assurance from me of such support as my future publications could give them; which is a pledge not to be withdrawn without grounds which I cannot anticipate. But this is not a consideration which need prevent our being friends and well-wishers.

Yours truly,  
“W. SCOTT.”

Mr. Robert Cadell, who was then a young man in training for his profession in Edinburgh, retains a strong impression of the interest which the *Lady of the Lake* excited there for two or three months before it was published. "James Ballantyne," he says, "read the cantos from time to time to select coteries, as they advanced at press. Common fame was loud in their favour; a great poem was on all hands anticipated. I do not recollect that any of all the author's works was ever looked for with more intense anxiety, or that any one of them excited a more extraordinary sensation when it did appear. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet—crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. It is a well-ascertained fact, that from the date of the publication of the *Lady of the Lake* the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

I owe to the same correspondent the following details:—"The quarto edition of 2,050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in octavo, viz., one of 3,000, a second of 3,250, and a third and a fourth each of 6,000 copies; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. In the next year (1811) there was another edition of 3,000; there was one of 2,000 in 1814; another of 2,000 in 1815; one of 2,000 again in 1819; and two, making between them 2,500, appeared in 1825; since which time the *Lady of the Lake*, in collective editions of his poetry, and in separate issues, must have circulated to the extent of at least 20,000 copies more." So that, down to the month of July, 1836, the legitimate sale in Great Britain has been not less than 50,000 copies.

I have little to add to what the Introduction of 1830 has told us concerning the history of the composition of this poem. Indeed, the coincidences of expression and illustration in the Introduction and the private letters, written twenty years before, are remarkable. In both we find him quoting Montrose's lines, and in both he quotes also "Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet," &c. In truth, both letters and Introduction were literal transcripts of his usual conversation on the subject. "A lady," he says, "to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived during her whole life on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me (at Ashiestiel) when the work was in progress, and used to ask me what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning. At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. 'Do not be so rash,' she said, 'my dearest cousin. You are already popular—more so, perhaps, than you yourself will believe, or than even I or other partial friends can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high—do not rashly attempt to climb higher and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favourite will not be permitted even to stumble with impunity.' I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose;—

“‘He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who dares not put it to the touch,  
To win or lose it all.’

“‘If I fail,’ I said—for the dialogue is strong in my recollection, ‘it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and *I will write prose for life*: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed—

“‘Up wi’ the bonnie blue bonnet,  
The dirk and the feather an’ a’!’

“Afterwards I showed my critic the first canto, which reconciled her to my imprudence.”—The lady here alluded to was no doubt Miss Christian Rutherford, his mother’s sister, who, as I have already mentioned, was so little above his age, that they seem always to have lived together on the terms of equality indicated in her use of the word “cousin” in the dialogue before us. She was, however, about as devout a Shakspearian as her nephew, and the use of *cousin*, for kinsman in general, is common to all our elder dramatists.\*

He says, in the same essay, “I remember that about the same time a friend started in to ‘heeze up my hope,’ like the minstrel in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling, perfectly competent to supply the wants of an imperfect or irregular education. He was a passionate admirer of field sports, which we often pursued together. As this friend happened to dine with me at Ashestiel one day, I took the opportunity of reading to him the first canto of the *Lady of the Lake*, in order to ascertain the effect the poem was likely to produce upon a person who was but too favourable a representative of readers at large. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs throw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with ‘a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprised out of all doubts of the reality of the tale.” Scott adds—“Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the king with the wandering knight Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. He was probably thinking of the lively but somewhat licentious old ballad in which the *dénouement* of a royal intrigue” [one of James V. himself, by the way] “takes place as follows:—

“‘He took a bugle from his side,  
He blew both loud and shrill,  
And four-and-twenty belted knights  
Came skipping owre the hill.

\* Thus Lady Capulet exclaims, on seeing the corpse of Tybalt,  
“‘Tybalt, my cousin! oh! my brother’s child!’

“ ‘Then he took out a little knife,  
 Let a’ his duddies fa’,  
 And he was the bravest gentleman  
 That was amang them a’.  
 And we’ll go no more a-roving,’ &c.

“This discovery, as Mr. Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, was but a trifle, yet it troubled me;” and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect with which the Irish postboy is said to reserve a ‘trot for the avenues.’”\*

I believe the shrewd critic here introduced was the poet’s excellent cousin, Charles Scott, now laird of Knowe-south. The story of the Irish postillion’s trot he owed to Mr. Moore.

In their reception of this poem, the critics were for once in full harmony with each other, and with the popular voice. The article in the *Quarterly* was written by George Ellis; but its eulogies, though less discriminative, are not a whit more emphatic than those of Mr. Jeffery in the rival review. Indeed, I have always considered this last paper as the best specimen of contemporary criticism on Scott’s poetry.

The Lay, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, Mar-mion as the most powerful and splendid, the *Lady of the Lake* as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of his great poems.

Of the success of the new poem he speaks as follows in his *Introduction* of 1830:—“It was certainly so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune. I had attained, perhaps, that degree of public reputation at which prudence, or certainly timidity, would have made a halt, and discontinued efforts by which I was far more likely to diminish my fame than to increase it. But—as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to King George III. that he himself, amid his full tide of popularity, was never a Wilkite—so I can with honest truth exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million. It must not be supposed that I was either so ungrateful, or so superabundantly candid, as to despise or scorn the value of those whose voice had elevated me so much higher than my own opinion told me I deserved. I felt, on the contrary, the more grateful to the public, as receiving that from partiality which I could not have claimed from merit, and I endeavoured to deserve the partiality by continuing such exertions as I was capable of for their amusement.”

James Ballantyne has preserved in his *Memorandum* an anecdote strikingly confirmative of the most remarkable statement in this page of Scott’s confessions. “I remember,” he says, “going into his library shortly after the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, and finding Miss Scott (who was then a very young girl) there by herself. I asked her, ‘Wall, Miss Sophia, how do you like the *Lady of the Lake*?’ Her answer was given with perfect simplicity. ‘Oh, I have not read it; papa says there’s nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.’

\* *Introduction to the Lady of the Lake—1830.*

In fact, his children in those days had no idea of the source of his distinction—or rather, indeed, that his position was in any respect different from that of other advocates, sheriffs, and Clerks of Session. The eldest boy came home one afternoon about this time from the High School, with tears and blood hardened together upon his cheeks. “Well, Wat,” said his father, “what have you been fighting about to-day?” With that the boy blushed and hung his head, and at last stammered out—that “he had been called a *lassie*.” “Indeed!” said Mrs. Scott, “that was a terrible mischief, to be sure.” “You may say what you please, mamma,” Wat answered roughly, “but I dinna think there’s a *wauf* (shabbier) thing in the world than to be a lassie, to sit boring at a clout.” Upon further inquiry, it turned out that one or two of his companions had dubbed him *The Lady of the Lake*, and the phrase was to him incomprehensible, save as conveying some imputation on his prowess, which he accordingly vindicated in the usual style of the Yards. Of the poem he had never before heard. Shortly after, this story having got wind, one of Scott’s colleagues of the Clerks’ Table said to the boy, “Gillnockie, my man, you cannot surely help seeing that great people make more work about your papa than they do about me or any other of your *uncles*—what is it, do you suppose, that occasions this?” The little fellow pondered for a minute or two, and then answered very gravely—“It’s commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting.” And yet this was the man that had his children all along so very much with him. In truth, however, young Walter guessed pretty shrewdly in the matter, for his father had all the tact of the Sutherland Highlander, whose detection of an Irish rebel up to the neck in a bog he has commemorated in a note upon Rokeby. Like him, he was quick to catch the *sparkle* of the future victim’s eye; and often said jestingly of himself, that whatever might be thought of him as a *maker* (poet), he was an excellent *trouvreur*.

Ballantyne adds:—“One day, about this same time, when his fame was supposed to have reached its acmé, I said to him, ‘Will you excuse me, Mr. Scott, but I should like to ask you what you think of your own genius as a poet, in comparison with that of Burns?’ He replied, ‘There is no comparison whatever—we ought not to be named in the same day.’ ‘Indeed!’ I answered, ‘would you compare Campbell to Burns?’ ‘No, James, not at all. If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.’—But, in fact,” (continues Ballantyne) “he had often said to me that neither his own nor any modern popular style of composition was that from which he derived most pleasure. I asked him what it was. He answered, Johnson’s; and that he had more pleasure in reading London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, than any other poetical composition he could mention; and I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting aloud from those productions.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### WAVERLEY RESUMED—UNFORTUNATE SPECULATIONS—VISION OF DON RODERICK—FIRST PURCHASE OF LAND.

WALTER SCOTT was at this epoch in the highest spirits, and having strong reasons of various kinds for his resolution to avail himself of the gale of favour, only hesitated in which quarter to explore the materials of some new romance. His first and most earnest desire was to spend a few months with the British army in the Peninsula, but this he soon resigned from an amiable motive. He then thought of revisiting Rokeby, for he had, from the first day that he spent on that magnificent domain, contemplated it as the scenery of a future poem. But the burst of enthusiasm which followed the appearance of the Lady of the Lake finally swayed him to undertake a journey, deeper than he had as yet gone, into the *Highlands*, and a warm invitation from the Laird of Staffa, a brother of his friend and colleague Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, easily induced him to add a voyage to the *Hebrides*. He was accompanied by part of his family (not forgetting his dog Wallace), and by several friends besides; among others his relation Mrs. Apreece (afterwards Lady Davy), who had been, as he says in one of his letters, "a lioness of the first magnitude in Edinburgh," during the preceding winter. He travelled slowly, with his own horses, through Argyllshire, as far as Oban; but, indeed, even where post-horses might have been had, this was the mode he always preferred in these family excursions, for he delighted in the liberty it afforded him of alighting and lingering as often and as long as he chose; and, in truth, he often performed the far greater part of the day's journey on foot—examining the map in the morning so as to make himself master of the bearings—and following his own fancy over some old disused riding track, or along the margin of a stream, while the carriage, with its female occupants, adhered to the upper road. At Oban, where they took to the sea, Mrs. Apreece met him by appointment.

He seems to have kept no journal during this expedition, but I shall add a letter which may furnish a tolerable sketch of the insular part of his progress, and of the feelings with which he first inspected the localities of his last great poem—*The Lord of the Isles*. The first of these letters is dated from the Hebridean residence of the young Laird of Staffa, now Sir Reginald Macdonald Stuart Seton of Staffa, Allanton, and Touch, Baronet.

*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Ulva House, July 19, 1810.

"I cannot, my dear Miss Baillie, resist the temptation of writing to you from scenes which you have rendered classical as well as immortal.

We, which in the present case means my wife, my eldest girl, and myself, are thus far in fortunate accomplishment of a pilgrimage to the Hebrides. The day before yesterday we passed the Lady's Rock, in the Sound of Mull, so near that I could almost have touched it. This is, you know, the Rock of your *Family Legend*. The boat, by my desire, went as near as prudence permitted, and I wished to have picked a relic from it, were it but a cockle-shell or a mussel, to have sent to you; but a spring tide was running with such force and velocity as to make the thing impossible. About two miles farther we passed under the Castle of Duart, the seat of Maclean, consisting of one huge (indeed immense) square tower, in ruins, and additional turrets and castellated buildings (the work, doubtless, of Benlora's guardianship), on which the roof still moulders. It overhangs the strait channel from a lofty rock, without a single tree in the vicinity, and is surrounded by high and barren mountains, forming altogether as wild and dreary a scene as I ever beheld. Duart is confronted by the opposite castles of Dunstaffnage, Dunolly, Ardtornish, and others, all once the abodes of grim feudal chiefs, who warred incessantly with each other. I think I counted seven of these fortresses in sight at once, and heard seven times seven legends of war and wonder connected with them. We landed late, wet and cold, on the island of Mull, near another old castle called Aros; separated, too, from our clothes, which were in a large wherry, which could not keep pace with our row-boat. Mr. Macdonald of Staffa, my kind friend and guide, had sent his piper (a constant attendant, mark that!) to rouse a Highland gentleman's family in the neighbourhood, where we were received with a profusion of kindness and hospitality. Why should I appal you with a description of our difficulties and distresses—how Charlotte lost her shoes, and little Sophia her whole collection of pebbles—how I was divorced from my razors, and the whole party looked like a Jewish sanhedrim? By this time we were accumulated as follows:—Sir George Paul, the great philanthropist, Mrs. Apreece, a distant relation of mine, Hannah Mackenzie, a daughter of our friend Henry, and Mackinnon of Mackinnon, a young gentleman born and bred in England, but nevertheless a Highland chief.\* It seems his father had acquired wealth, and this young man, who now visits the Highlands for the first time, is anxious to buy back some of the family property which was sold long since. Some twenty Mackinnons, who happened to live within hearing of our arrival (that is, I suppose, within ten miles of Aros), came posting to see their young chief, who behaved with great kindness, and propriety, and liberality. Next day we rode across the isle on Highland ponies, attended by a numerous retinue of gillies, and arrived at the head of the salt-water loch called Loch an Gaoil, where Staffa's boats awaited us with colours flying and pipes playing. We proceeded in state to this lonely isle, where our honoured lord has a very comfortable residence, and were received by a discharge of swivels and musketry from his people.

"Yesterday we visited Staffa and Iona. The former is one of the most extraordinary places I ever beheld. It exceeded, in my mind, every description I had heard of it; or rather, the appearance of the

\* William Alexander Mackinnon, Esq., now Member of Parliament for Lymington, Hants.

cavern, composed entirely of basaltic pillars as high as the roof of a cathedral, and running deep into the rock, eternally swept by a deep and swelling sea, and paved, as it were, with ruddy marble, baffles all description. You can walk along the broken pillars, with some difficulty, and in some places with a little danger, as far as the farthest extremity. Boats also can come in below when the sea is placid, which is seldom the case. I had become a sort of favourite with the Hebridean boatmen, I suppose from my anxiety about their old customs, and they were much pleased to see me get over the obstacles which stopped some of the party. So they took the whim of solemnly christening a great stone seat at the mouth of the cavern, *Clachan an Bairdh*, or the Poet's Stone. It was consecrated with a pibroch, which the echoes rendered tremendous, and a glass of whiskey, not poured forth in the ancient mode of libation, but turned over the throats of the assistants. The head boatman, whose father had been himself a bard, made me a speech on the occasion; but as it was in Gaelic, I could only receive it as a silly beauty does a fine-spun compliment—bow, and say nothing.

“When this fun was over (in which, strange as it may seem, the men were quite serious), we went to Iona, where there are some ancient and curious monuments. From this remote island the light of Christianity shone forth on Scotland and Ireland. The ruins are of a rude architecture, but curious to the antiquary. Our return was less comfortable; we had to row twenty miles against an Atlantic tide and some wind, besides the pleasure of seeing occasional squalls gathering to windward. The ladies were sick, especially poor Hannah Mackenzie, and none of the gentlemen escaped except Staffa and myself. The men, however, cheered by the pipes, and by their own interesting boat-songs, which were uncommonly wild and beautiful, one man leading and the others answering in chorus, kept pulling away without apparently the least sense of fatigue, and we reached Ulva at ten at night, tolerably wet, and well disposed for bed.

“Our friend Staffa is himself an excellent specimen of Highland chieftainship; he is a cadet of Clanronald, and lord of a cluster of isles on the western side of Mull, and a large estate (in extent at least) on that island. By dint of minute attention to this property, and particularly to the management of his kelp, he has at once trebled his income and doubled his population, while emigration is going on all around him. But he is very attentive to his people, who are distractedly fond of him, and has them under such regulations as conduce both to his own benefit and their profit; and keeps a certain sort of rude state and hospitality, in which they take much pride. I am quite satisfied that nothing under the personal attention of the landlord himself will satisfy a Highland tenantry, and that the substitution of factors, which is now becoming general, is one great cause of emigration. This mode of life has, however, its evils, and I can see them in this excellent man. The habit of solitary power is dangerous even to the best regulated minds, and this ardent and enthusiastic young man has not escaped the prejudices incident to his situation. But I think I have bestowed enough of my tediousness upon you. To ballast my letter, I put in one of the hallowed green pebbles from the shore of St. Columba—put it into your work-basket until we

meet, when you will give me some account of its virtues. Don't suppose the lapidaries can give you any information about it, for in their profane eyes it is good for nothing. But the piper is sounding to breakfast, so no more (excepting love to Miss Agnes, Dr., and Mrs. Baillie), from your truly affectionate

“WALTER SCOTT.

“P.S.—I am told by the learned, the pebble will wear its way out of the letter, so I will keep it till I get to Edinburgh. I must not omit to mention that all through these islands I have found every person familiarly acquainted with the Family Legend, and great admirers.”

The Iona pebble, mentioned in Scott's letter from Ulva, being set in a brooch of the form of a harp, was sent to Joanna Baillie some months later; but it may be as well to insert here the letter which accompanied it. The young friend, to whose return from a trip to the seat of war in the Peninsula it alludes, was John Miller, Esq., then practising at the Scotch bar, but now an eminent King's counsel of Lincoln's Inn.

“I should not have been so long your debtor, my dear Miss Baillie, for your kind and valued letter, had not the false knave, at whose magic touch the Iona pebbles were to assume a shape in some degree appropriate to the person to whom they are destined, delayed finishing his task. I hope you will set some value upon this little trumpery brooch, because it is a harp, and a Scotch harp, and set with Iona stones. This last circumstance is more valuable, if ancient tales be true, than can be ascertained from the reports of dull modern lapidaries. These green stones, blessed of St. Columba, have a virtue, saith old Martin, to gratify each of them a single wish of the wearer. I believe that which is most frequently formed by those who gather them upon the shores of the saint, is for a fair wind to transport them from his domains. Now, after this, you must suppose everything respecting this said harp sacred and hallowed. The very inscription is, you will please to observe, in the ancient Celtic language and character, and has a very talismanic look. I hope that upon you it will have the effect of a conjuration, for the words *Buail a'n Teud* signify *Strike the String*; and thus having, like the pedlars who deal in like matters of value, exhausted all my eloquence in setting forth the excellent outward qualities and mysterious virtues of my little keepsake, I have only to add, in homely phrase, God give you joy to wear it. \* \*

“Meanwhile, the Lady of the Lake is likely to come to preferment in an unexpected manner, for two persons of no less eminence than Messrs. Martin and Reynolds, play carpenters in ordinary to Covent Garden, are employed in scrubbing, careening, and cutting her down into one of those new-fashioned sloops called a melodrama, to be launched at the theatre; and my friend, Mr. H. Siddons, emulous of such a noble design, is at work on the same job here. It puts me in mind of the observation with which our parish smith accompanied his answer to an inquiry whom he had heard preach on Sunday. ‘Mr. Such-a-one—oh! sir, he made *neat work*,’—thinking, doubtless, of turning off a horseshoe handsomely. I think my worthy artizans will make neat work too, before they have done with my unlucky materials; but, as Durandarte says in the cavern

of Montesinos, 'Patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards.' Jeffrey *was* the author of the critique in the Edinburgh,—he sent it to me in the sheet, with an apology for some things in that of Marmion, which he said contained needless asperities; and, indeed, whatever I may think of the justice of some part of his criticism, I think his general tone is much softened in my behalf.

"You say nothing about the drama on Fear, for which you have chosen so admirable a subject, and which, I think, will be in your own most powerful manner. I hope you will have an eye to its being actually represented. Perhaps of all passions it is the most universally interesting; for although most part of an audience may have been in love once in their lives, and many engaged in the pursuits of ambition, and some, perhaps, have fostered deadly hate; yet there will always be many in each case who cannot judge of the operations of these motives from personal experience: whereas, I will bet my life there is not a soul of them but has felt the impulse of fear, were it but, as the old tale goes, at snuffing a candle with his fingers. I believe I should have been able to communicate some personal anecdotes on the subject, had I been enabled to accomplish a plan I have had much at heart this summer, namely, to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merry men in Portugal; but I found the idea gave Mrs. Scott more distress than I am entitled to do for the mere gratification of my own curiosity. Not that there would have been any great danger,—for I could easily, as a non-combatant, have kept out of the way of the "grinning honour" of my namesake, Sir Walter Blount, and I think I should have been overpaid for a little hardship and risk by the novelty of the scene. I could have got very good recommendations to Lord Wellington; and I daresay I should have picked up some curious materials for battle scenery. A friend of mine made the very expedition, and arriving at Oporto when our army was in retreat from the frontier, he was told of the difficulty and danger he might encounter in crossing the country to the southward, so as to join them on the march; nevertheless he travelled on through a country totally deserted, unless when he met bands of fugitive peasantry flying they scarce knew whither, or the yet wilder groups of the *Ordinanza*, or *levy en masse*, who, fired with revenge or desire of plunder, had armed themselves to harass the French detached parties. At length in a low glen he heard, with feelings that may be easily conceived, the distant sound of a Highland bagpipe playing 'The Garb of Old Gaul,' and fell into the quarters of a Scotch regiment, where he was most courteously received by his countrymen, who assured 'his Honour he was just come in time to see the pattle.' Accordingly, being a young man of spirit, and a volunteer sharpshooter, he got a rifle, joined the light corps, and next day witnessed the Battle of Busaco, of which he describes the carnage as being terrible. The narrative was very simply told, and conveyed, better than any I have seen, the impressions which such scenes are likely to make when they have the effect (I had almost said the charm) of novelty. I don't know why it is I never found a soldier could give me an idea of a battle. I believe their mind is too much upon the *tactique* to regard the picturesque, just as the lawyers care very little for an eloquent speech at the bar, if it does not show good doctrine. The technical

phrases of the military art, too, are unfavourable to convey a description of the concomitant terror and desolation that attends an engagement. But enough of this bald disjointed chat, from ever yours, "W. S."

There appeared in the London Courier of September 15, 1810, an article signed S. T. C., charging Scott with being a plagiarist, more especially from the works of the poet for whose initials this signature had no doubt been meant to pass. On reading this silly libel, Mr. Southey felt satisfied that Samuel Taylor Coleridge could have no concern in its manufacture; but as Scott was not so well acquainted with Coleridge as himself, he lost no time in procuring his friend's indignant disavowal, and forwarding it to Ashestiel. Scott acknowledges this delicate attention as follows:—

*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, Thursday.

"MY DEAR SOUTHEY,—

"Your letter, this morning received, released me from the very painful feeling, that a man of Mr. Coleridge's high talents, which I had always been among the first to appreciate as they deserve, had thought me worthy of the sort of public attack which appeared in the Courier of the 15th. The initials are so remarkable, and the trick so very impudent, that I was likely to be fairly duped by it, for which I have to request Mr. Coleridge's forgiveness. I believe attacks of any sort sit as light upon me as they can on any one. If I have had my share of them, it is one point, at least, in which I resemble greater poets; but I should not like to have them come from the hand of contemporary genius. A man, though he does not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,' would not willingly be stooped upon by a falcon. I am truly obliged to your friendship for so speedily relieving me from so painful a feeling. The hoax was probably designed to set two followers of literature by the ears, and I daresay will be followed up by something equally impudent. As for the imitations, I have not the least hesitation in saying to you, that I was unconscious at the time of appropriating the goods of others, although I have not the least doubt that several of the passages must have been running in my head. Had I meant to steal, I would have been more cautious to disfigure the stolen goods. In one or two instances the resemblance seems general and casual, and in one, I think, it was impossible I could practise plagiarism, as *Ethwald*, one of the poems quoted, was published *after* the Lay of the Last Minstrel. A witty rogue, the other day, who sent me a letter subscribed Detector, proved me guilty of stealing a passage from one of Vida's Latin poems, which I had never seen or heard of; yet there was so strong a general resemblance as fairly to authorize Detector's suspicion.

"I renounced my Greta excursion in consequence of having made instead a tour to the Highlands, particularly to the Isles. I wished for Wordsworth and you a hundred times. The scenery is quite different from that on the mainland, dark, savage, and horrid, but occasionally magnificent in the highest degree. Staffa, in particular, merits well its far-famed reputation: it is a cathedral arch, scooped by the hand of

nature, equal in dimensions and in regularity to the most magnificent aisle of a gothic cathedral. The sea rolls up to the extremity in most tremendous majesty, and with a voice like ten thousand giants shouting at once. I visited Icolmkill also, where there are some curious monuments, mouldering among the poorest and most naked wretches that I ever beheld. Affectionately yours,  
"W. SCOTT."

The "lines of Vida" which "Detector" had enclosed to Scott as the obvious original of the address to "Woman" in *Marmion*, closing with

"When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou!"

end as follows,—and it must be owned that, if Vida had really written them, a more extraordinary example of casual coincidence could never have been pointed out:—

"Cum dolor atque supercilio gravis imminet angor,  
Funderis angelico sola ministerio!"

Detector's reference is "*Vida ad Eranen*, EL. II. v. 21;" but it is almost needless to add there are no such lines, and no piece bearing such a title, in Vida's works. Detector was no doubt some young college wag, for his letter has a Cambridge post-mark.

In the course of this autumn appeared the Poetical Works of Miss Seward, in three volumes 12mo, with a Prefatory Memoir of her Life by Scott. This edition had been enjoined by her last will; but his part in it was an ungrateful one, and the book was among the most unfortunate that James Ballantyne printed, and his brother published, in deference to the personal feelings of their partner. He had been, as was natural, pleased and flattered by the attentions of the Lichfield poetess in the days of his early aspirations after literary distinction; but her verses, which he had with his usual readiness praised to herself beyond their worth, appeared when collected a formidable monument of mediocrity. Her *Correspondence*, published at the same time by Constable, was considered by him with still greater aversion. He requested the bookseller to allow him to look over the MS., and draw his pen through passages in which her allusions to letters of his own might compromise him as a critic on his poetical contemporaries. To this request Constable handsomely acceded, although it was evident that he thus deprived the collection of its best chance of popularity. I see, on comparing her letters as they originally reached Scott, with the printed copies, that he had also struck out many of her most extravagant rhapsodies about himself and his works.

And now I come to a very curious letter of James Ballantyne's, the date of which seems to fix pretty accurately the time when Scott first resumed the long-forgotten MS. of his *Waverley*. As in the Introduction of 1829 he mentions having received discouragement as to the opening part of the novel from two friends, and as Ballantyne on this occasion writes as if he had never before seen any portion of it, I conclude that the fragment of 1805 had in that year been submitted to Erskine alone.

"DEAR SIR,—

"What you have sent of *Waverley* has amused me much; and certainly if I had read it as part of a new novel, the remainder of which was open to my perusal, I should have proceeded with avidity. So much for its general effect; but you have sent me too little to enable me to form a decided opinion. Were I to say that I was equally struck with *Waverley* as I was with the much smaller portion of the *Lady*, which you first presented to us as a specimen, the truth would not be in me; but the cases are different. It is impossible that a small part of a fine novel can equally impress one with the decided conviction of splendour and success as a small part of a fine poem. I will state one or two things that strike me. Considering that 'sixty years since' only leads us back to the year 1750, a period when our fathers were alive and merry, it seems to me that the air of antiquity diffused over the character is rather too great to harmonize with the time. The period is modern; Johnson was writing and Garrick was acting—and in fact scarcely anything appears to have altered more important than the cut of a coat.

"The account of the studies of *Waverley* seems unnecessarily minute. There are few novel readers to whom it would be interesting. I can see at once the connection between the studies of *Don Quixote*, or of the *Female Quixote*, and the events of their lives; but I have not yet been able to trace betwixt *Waverley's* character and his studies such clear and decided connection. The account, in short, seemed to me too particular; quite unlike your usual mode in your poetry, and less happy. It may be, however, that the further progress of the character will defeat this criticism. The character itself I think excellent and interesting, and I was equally astonished and delighted to find in the last-written chapter, that you can paint to the eye in prose as well as in verse.

"Perhaps your own reflections are rather too often mixed with the narrative—but I state this with much diffidence. I do not mean to object to a train of reflections arising from some striking event, but I don't like their so frequent recurrence. The language is spirited, but perhaps rather careless. The humour is admirable. Should you go on? My opinion is, clearly—certainly. I have no doubt of success, though it is impossible to guess how much. . . . Ever respectfully,

"J. B."

The part of the letter which I have omitted, refers to the state of Ballantyne's business at the time when it was written. He had, that same week, completed the eleventh edition of the *Lay*; and the fifth of the *Lady of the Lake* had not passed through his press before new orders from London called for the beginning of a sixth. I presume the printer's exultation on this triumphant success had a great share in leading him to consider with doubt and suspicion the propriety of his friend's interrupting just then his career as the great caterer for readers of poetry. However this and other matters may have stood, the novel appears to have been forthwith laid aside again.

Some sentences refer to less fortunate circumstances in their joint affairs. The publishing firm was as yet little more than a twelvemonth old, and already James began to apprehend that some of their mightiest under-

takings would wholly disappoint Scott's prognostications. He speaks with particular alarm of the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, of which Weber\* had now dismissed several volumes from his incompetent and presumptuous hand. How Scott should ever have countenanced the project of an edition of an English book of this class, by a mere drudging *German*, appears to me quite inexplicable. He placed at Weber's disposal his own annotated copy, which had been offered some years before for the use of Gifford; but Weber's text is thoroughly disgraceful, and so are all the notes, except those which he owed to his patron's own pen. James Ballantyne augurs, and well might he do so, not less darkly, as to the Aston speculation—that is, the bulky collection entitled *Tixal Poetry*. "Over this," he says, "the (Edinburgh) Review of the Sadler has thrown a heavy cloud—the fact is, it seems to me to have ruined it. Here is the same editor and the same printer, and your name withdrawn. I hope you agree with John and me, that this Aston business ought to be got rid of at almost any sacrifice. We could not now even ask a London bookseller to take a share, and a net outlay of near £2,500 upon a worse than doubtful speculation is surely 'most tolerable and not to be endured.'"

Another unpromising adventure of this season was the publication of the *History of the Culdees* (that is, of the clergy of the primitive Scoto-Celtic Church), by Scott's worthy old friend, Dr. John Jamieson, the author of the celebrated Dictionary. This work, treating of an obscure subject, on which very different opinions were and are entertained by Episcopalians on the one hand, and the adherents of Presbyterianism on the other, was also printed and published by the Ballantynes, in consequence of the interest which Scott felt, not for the writer's hypothesis, but for the writer personally; and the result was another heavy loss to himself and his partners. But a far more serious business was the establishment of the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, which, as we have seen, was suggested by Scott in the very dawn of his bookselling projects. The two first volumes were issued about this time, and expectation had been highly excited by the announcement that the historical department was in the hands of Southey, while Scott and many other eminent persons were to contribute regularly to its miscellaneous literature and science. Mr. Southey was fortunate in beginning his narrative with the great era of the Spanish Revolt against Napoleon, and it exhibited his usual research, reflection, elegance, and spirit. Several of the miscellanies also were admirable: Mr. Southey inserted in the second volume for 1808, published in 1810, some of the most admired of his minor poems; and Scott did the like. He moreover drew up for that volume an *Essay* of considerable extent on those changes in the Scottish System of Judicature, which had occupied the attention of the Commission under which he served as secretary; and the sagacity of this piece appears, on the whole, as honourable to him, as the clear felicity of its language. Nevertheless, the public were alarmed by the prospect of two volumes annually: it was, in short, a new periodical publication on a large scale: all such adventures are hazardous in the extreme; and none of them ever can succeed, unless

\* Scott's amanuensis.

there be a skilful bookseller and a zealous editor, who give a very large share of their industry and intelligence, day after day, to the conduct of all its arrangements. Such a bookseller John Ballantyne was not; such an editor, with Scott's multifarious engagements, he could not be for an Annual Register; and who, indeed, could wish that this had been otherwise? The volumes succeeded each other at irregular intervals; there was soon felt the want of one ever-active presiding spirit; and though the work was continued during a long series of years, it never was the source of anything but anxiety and disappointment to its original projectors.

His office as a Clerk of Session had never yet brought him anything but labour, and that he consequently complained from time to time of the inroads this labour made on hours which might otherwise have been more profitably bestowed, I suspect his antipathy to the new Law system, as a system, had no small share in producing the state of mind indicated in a remarkable letter addressed in the later part of this year to his brother Thomas. The other source of uneasiness to which it alludes has been already touched upon, and we shall have but too much of it hereafter. He says to his brother (Ashestiel, 1st November, 1810), "I have no objection to tell you in confidence, that, were Dundas to go out Governor-General to India, and were he willing to take me with him in a good situation, I would not hesitate to pitch the Court of Session and the booksellers to the devil, and try my fortune in another climate." He adds, "but this is strictly *entre nous*"—nor indeed was I aware, until I found this letter, that he had ever entertained such a design as that which it communicates. Mr. Dundas (now Lord Melville), being deeply conversant in our Eastern affairs, and highly acceptable to the Court of Directors in the office of President of the Board of Control, which he had long filled, was spoken of, at various times in the course of his public life, as likely to be appointed Governor-General of India. He had, no doubt, hinted to Scott that in case he should ever assume that high station, it would be very agreeable for him to be accompanied by his early friend; and there could be little question of his capacity to have filled with distinction the part either of an Indian secretary or of an Indian judge.

But though it is easy to account for his expressing in so marked a manner at this particular period his willingness to relinquish literature as the main occupation of his time, it is impossible to consider the whole course of his correspondence and conversation without agreeing in the conclusion of Mr. Morritt, that he was all along sincere in the opinion that literature ought never to be ranked on the same scale of importance with the conduct of business in any of the great departments of public life. This opinion he always expressed, and I have no doubt that at any period preceding his acquisition of a landed property, he would have acted on it, even to the extent of leaving Scotland, had a suitable opportunity been afforded him to give that evidence of his sincerity. This is so remarkable a feature in his character, that the reader will forgive me should I recur to it in the sequel.

At the same time I have no notion that at this or any other period he contemplated abandoning literature. Such a thought would hardly enter

the head of the man, not yet forty years of age, whose career had been one of unbroken success, and whose third great work had just been received with a degree of favour, both critical and popular, altogether unprecedented in the annals of his country. His hope, no doubt, was that an honourable official station in the East might afford him both a world of new materials for poetry, and what would in his case be abundance of leisure for turning them to account, according to the deliberate dictates of his own judgment. What he desired to escape from was not the exertion of his genius, which must ever have been to him the source of his most exquisite enjoyment, but the daily round of prosaic and perplexing toils in which his connection with the Ballantynes had involved him. He was able to combine the regular discharge of such functions with the exercise of the high powers of imagination in a manner of which history affords no other example; yet many, no doubt, were the weary hours when he repented him of the rash engagements which had imposed such a burden of mere taskwork on his energies. But his external position before the lapse of another year underwent a change which for ever fixed his destiny to the soil of his best affections and happiest inspirations.

The letters of Scott to all his friends have sufficiently shown the unflagging interest with which, among all his personal labours and anxieties, he watched the progress of the great contest in the Peninsula. It was so earnest that he never on any journey, not even in his very frequent passages between Edinburgh and Ashiestiel, omitted to take with him the largest and best map he had been able to procure of the seat of war; upon this he was perpetually poring, tracing the marches and counter-marches of the French and English, by means of black and white pins; and not seldom did Mrs. Scott complain of this constant occupation of his attention and her carriage. In the beginning of 1811, a committee was formed in London to collect subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese, who had seen their lands wasted, their vines torn up, and their houses burnt, in the course of Massena's last unfortunate campaign; and Scott, on reading the advertisement, immediately addressed Mr. Whitmore, the chairman, begging that the committee would allow him to contribute to their fund the profits, to whatever they might amount, of a poem which he proposed to write upon a subject connected with the localities of the patriotic struggle. His offer was of course accepted; and the *Vision of Don Roderick* was begun as soon as the spring vacation enabled him to retire to Ashiestiel.

The poem was published, in 4to, in July, and the immediate proceeds were forwarded to the board in London. His friend the Earl of Dalkeith seems to have been a member of the committee, and he writes thus to Scott on the occasion:—

"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce so beneficially and to so exalted a purpose." I presume, however, that when his lordship thus mentions 100 guineas, he alludes merely to the first instalment of Scott's contribution.

In the original preface to this poem Scott alludes to two events which

had "cruelly interrupted his task"—the successive deaths of his kind friend the Lord President of the Court of Session (Blair), and his early patron, Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville—and his letters at the time afford additional evidence of the shock his feelings had thus sustained.

The Vision of Don Roderick had features of novelty, both as to the subject and the manner of the composition, which excited much attention, and gave rise to some sharp controversy. The main fable was indeed from the most picturesque region of old romance; but it was made throughout the vehicle of feelings directly adverse to those with which the Whig critics had all along regarded the interference of Britain in behalf of the nations of the Peninsula; and the silence which, while celebrating our other generals on that scene of action, had been preserved with respect to Scott's own gallant countryman, Sir John Moore, was considered or represented by them as an odious example of genius hoodwinked by the influence of party. Nor were there wanting persons who affected to discover that the charm of Scott's poetry had to a great extent evaporated under the severe test to which he had exposed it, by adopting, in place of those comparatively light and easy measures in which he had hitherto dealt, the most elaborate one that our literature exhibits. The production, notwithstanding the complexity of the Spenserian stanza, had been very rapidly executed, and it shows, accordingly, many traces of negligence. But the patriotic inspiration of it found an echo in the vast majority of British hearts; many of the Whig oracles themselves acknowledged that the difficulties of the metre had been on the whole successfully overcome, and even the hardest critics were compelled to express unqualified admiration of various detached pictures and passages, which, in truth, as no one now disputes, neither he nor any other poet ever excelled. The whole setting or framework—whatever relates, in short, to the last of the Goths himself—was, I think, even then unanimously pronounced admirable, and no party feeling could blind any man to the heroic splendour of such stanzas as those in which the three equally gallant elements of a British army are contrasted. I incline to believe that the choice of the measure had been in no small degree the result of those hints which Scott had received on the subject of his favourite octosyllabics, more especially from Ellis and Canning; and, as we shall see presently, he about this time made more than one similar experiment, in all likelihood from the same motive.

Of the letters which reached him in consequence of the appearance of the Vision, he has preserved several, which had no doubt interested and gratified him at the time. One of these was from Lady Wellington, to whom he had never had the honour of being presented, but who could not, as she said, remain silent on the receipt of such a tribute to the fame of "the first and best of men." Ever afterwards she continued to correspond with him, and indeed among the very last letters which the Duchess of Wellington appears to have written was a most affecting one, bidding him farewell and thanking him for the solace his works had afforded her during her fatal illness. Another was in these terms:—

To Walter Scott, Esq.

"Hinckley, July 26, 1811.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I am very glad that you have essayed a new metre—new, I mean, for you to use. That which you have chosen is perhaps at once the most artificial and the most magnificent that our language affords; and your success in it ought to encourage you to believe, that for you, at least, the majestic march of Dryden (to my ear the perfection of harmony) is not, as you seem to pronounce it, irrecoverable. Am I wrong in imagining that *Spenser* does not use the *plusquam-Alexandrine*—the verse which is as much longer than an Alexandrine as an Alexandrine is longer than an ordinary heroic measure? I have no books where I am, to which to refer. You use this—and in the first stanza.

"Your poem has been met on my part by an exchange somewhat like that of Diomed's armour against Glaucus's—brass for gold—a heavy speech upon bullion. If you have never thought upon the subject—as to my great contentment I never had a twelvemonth ago—let me counsel you to keep clear of it, and forthwith put my speech into the fire, unread. It has no one merit but that of sincerity. I formed my opinion most reluctantly; having formed it, I could not but maintain it; having maintained it in Parliament, I wished to record it intelligibly. But it is one which, so far from cherishing and wishing to make proselytes to, I would much rather renounce, if I could find a person to convince me that it is erroneous. This is at least an unusual state of mind in controversy. It is such as I do not generally profess on all subjects—such as you will give me credit for not being able to maintain, for instance, when either the exploits which you celebrate in your last poem, or your manner of celebrating them, are disputed or disparaged. Believe me, with great regard and esteem, very sincerely yours,

"GEORGE CANNING."

But, of all letters addressed to the author of the *Vision of Don Roderick*, I am very sure no one was so welcome as that which reached him, some months after his poem had ceased to be new in England, from a dear friend of his earliest days, who, after various chances and changes of life, was then serving in Lord Wellington's army, as a captain in the 58th regiment. I am sure that Sir Adam Ferguson's good-nature will pardon my inserting here some extracts from a communication which his affectionate schoolfellow very often referred to in after years with the highest appearance of interest and pleasure.

To Walter Scott, Esq.

"Lisbon, 31st August, 1811.

"MY DEAR WALTER,—

"After such a length of silence between us, and, I grant on my part, so unwarrantable, I think I see your face of surprise on recognizing this MS., and hear you exclaim—What strange wind has blown a letter from *Linton*? I must say, that although both you and my good friend Mrs. S. must long ago have set me down as a most indifferent, not to say ungrateful sort of gentleman, far otherwise has been the case, as in the course of my wanderings through this country I have often beguiled a

long march, or watchful night's duty, by thinking on the merry fireside in North Castle Street. However, the irregular roving life we lead always interfered with my resolves of correspondence.

"But now, quitting self, I need not tell you how greatly I was delighted at the success of the *Lady of the Lake*. I daresay you are by this time well tired of such greetings—so I shall only say, that last spring I was so fortunate as to get a reading of it, when in the lones of Torres Vedras, and thought I had no inconsiderable right to enter into and judge of its beauties, having made one of the party on your first visit to the Trossachs; and you will allow, that a little vanity on my part on this account (everything considered) was natural enough. While the book was in my possession, I had nightly invitations to *evening parties*! to read and illustrate passages of it; and I must say that (though not conscious of much merit in the way of recitation) my attempts to do justice to the grand opening of the stag-hunt were always followed with bursts of applause—for this canto was the favourite among the rough sons of the Fighting Third Division. At that time supplies of various kinds, especially anything in the way of delicacies, were very scanty; and, in gratitude, I am bound to declare, that to the good offices of the Lady, I owed many a nice slice of ham and rummer of hot punch, which, I assure you, were amongst the most welcome favours that one officer could bestow on another during the long rainy nights of last January and February. By desire of my messmates of the Black-cuffs, I some time ago sent a commission to London for a copy of the music of the Boat-Song, 'Hail to the Chief,' as performed at Covent Garden, but have not yet got it. If you can assist in this, I need not say that on every performance a flowing bumper will go round to the Bard. We have lately been fortunate in getting a good master to our band, who is curious in old Scotch and Irish airs, and has harmonized *Johnny Cope*, &c., &c.

"Lisbon, 6th October.

"I had written all the foregoing botheration, intending to send it by a wounded friend going home to Scotland, when, to my no small joy, your parcel, enclosing *Don Roderick*, reached me. How kind I take it your remembering old Linton in this way. A day or two after I received yours I was sent into the Alentejo, where I remained a month, and only returned a few days ago, much delighted with the trip. You wish to know how I like the Vision; but as you can't look for any learned critique from me, I shall only say that I fully entered into the spirit and beauty of it, and that I relished much the wild and fanciful opening of the introductory part. Yet what particularly delighted me were the stanzas announcing the approach of the British fleets and armies to this country, and the three delightful ones descriptive of the different troops, English, Scotch, and Irish; and I can assure you the Pats are, to a man, enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself. Your swearing, in the true character of a minstrel, 'shiver my harp and burst its every cord,' amused me not a little. From being well acquainted with a great many of the situations described, they had of course the more interest, and 'Grim Busaco's iron ridge' most happily paints the appearance of that memorable field. You

must know that we have got with us some bright geniuses, natives of the *dear country*, and who go by the name of 'the poets.' Of course a present of this kind is not thrown away upon indifferent subjects, but it is read and repeated with all the enthusiasm your warmest wish could desire. Should it be my fate to survive, I am resolved to try my hand on a snug little farm either up or down the Tweed, somewhere in your neighbourhood, and on this dream many a delightful castle do I build.

"I am most happy to hear that the Club goes on in the old smooth style. I am afraid, however, that now \* \* \* has become a judge, the delights of *Scrogum* and *The Tailor* will be lost, till revived perhaps by the old croupier in the shape of a battered half-pay officer. Yours affectionately,

"ADAM FERGUSON."

More than one of the gallant captain's *châteaux en Espagne* were, as we shall see, realized in the sequel. I must not omit a circumstance which had reached Scott from another source, and which he always took special pride in relating, namely, that in the course of the day when the Lady of the Lake first reached Sir Adam Ferguson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery; somewhere, no doubt, on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground; while they kept that attitude, the captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza whenever the French shot struck the bank close above them.

I have alluded to some other new experiments in versification about this time as probably originating in the many hints of Ellis, Canning, and probably of Erskine, that, if he wished to do himself full justice in "poetical narration, he ought to attempt at least the rhyme of Dryden's Fables. Having essayed the most difficult of all English measures in Don Roderick, he this year tried also the heroic couplet, and produced that imitation of Crabbe, *The Poacher*: on seeing which, Crabbe, as his son's biography tells us, exclaimed, "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can, and *something more*." This piece, together with some verses, afterwards worked up into the Bridal of Triermain, and another fragment in imitation of Moore's Lyrics, when first forwarded to Ballantyne, were accompanied with a little note, in which he says: "Understand I have no idea of parody, but serious imitation, if I can accomplish it. The subject for my Crabbe is a character in his line which he has never touched. I think of Wordsworth, too, and perhaps a ghost story after Lewis. I should be ambitious of trying Campbell; but his peculiarity consists so much in the matter, and so little in the manner, that (to his praise be it spoken), I rather think I cannot touch him." The three imitations which he did execute appeared in the Edinburgh Register for 1809, published in the autumn of 1811. They were there introduced by a letter entitled *The Inferno of Altisidora*, in which he shadows out the chief reviewers of the day, especially his friends Jeffrey and Gifford, with admirable breadth and yet lightness of pleasantry. He kept his secret as to this *Inferno*, and all its appendages, even from Miss Baillie—to whom he says, on their appearance, that—"the imitation of Crabbe had struck him as good; that of Moore as bad; and that of himself as beginning

well, but falling off grievously to the close." He seems to have been equally mysterious as to an imitation of the quaint love verses of the beginning of the seventeenth century, which had found its way shortly before into the newspapers, under the name of *The Resolve*; but I find him acknowledging its parentage to his brother Thomas, whose sagacity had at once guessed at the truth. "As to the *Resolve*," he says, "it is mine, and it is not—or, to be less enigmatical, it is an old fragment, which I coopered up into its present state with the purpose of quizzing certain judges of poetry, who had been extremely delighted, and declared that no living poet could write in the same exquisite taste." These critics were his friends of the Friday Club. When included in the *Register*, however, the *Resolve* had his name affixed to it. In that case his concealment had already answered its purpose. It is curious to trace the beginnings of the systematic mystification which he afterwards put in practice with regard to the most important series of his works.

The quarto edition of *Don Roderick* having rapidly gone off, instead of reprinting the poem as usual in a separate octavo, he inserted it entire in the current volume of the *Register*; a sufficient proof how much that undertaking was already felt to require extraordinary exertion on the part of its proprietors. Among other minor tasks of the same year he produced an edition of *Wilson's Secret History of the Court of King James I.*, in two vols. 8vo, to which he supplied a copious preface and a rich body of notes. He also contributed two or three articles to the *Quarterly Review*.

Throughout 1811 Scott's serious labours continued to be bestowed on the advancing edition of *Swift*; but this and all other literary tasks were frequently interrupted in consequence of an important step which he took early in the year; namely, the purchase of the first portion of what became in the sequel an extensive landed property in Roxburghshire. He had now the near prospect of coming into the beneficial use of the office he had so long filled without emolument in the Court of Session. For, connected with the other reforms in the Scotch judicature, was a plan for allowing the retirement of functionaries who had served to an advanced period of life, upon pensions: should this meet the approbation of Parliament, there was little doubt that Mr. George Home would avail himself of the opportunity to resign the place of which he had now for five years executed none of the duties; and the second Lord Melville, who had now succeeded his father as the virtual Minister for Scotland, had so much at heart a measure in itself obviously just and prudent, that little doubt could be entertained of the result of his efforts in its behalf. The Clerks of Session, it had been already settled, were henceforth to be paid not by fees, but by fixed salaries; the amount of each salary, it was soon after arranged, should be £1,300 per annum; and contemplating a speedy accession of professional income so considerable as this, and at the same time a vigorous prosecution of his literary career, Scott fixed his eyes on a small farm within a few miles of Ashetiel, which it was understood would presently be in the market, and resolved to place himself by its acquisition in the situation to which he had probably from his earliest days looked forward as the highest object of ambition, that of a Tweedside Laird—*Sit mihi sedes utinam senectæ!*

And the place itself, though not to the general observer a very attractive one, had long been one of peculiar interest for him. I have often heard him tell, that when travelling in his boyhood with his father, from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man suddenly desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." His father then conducted him to a rude stone on the edge of an acclivity about half a mile above the Tweed at Abbotsford, which marks the spot—

"Where gallant Cessford's life-blood dear  
Reeked on dark Elliott's border spear."

This was the conclusion of the battle of Melrose, fought in 1526, between the Earls of Angus and Home, and the two chiefs of the race of Kerr, on the one side, and Buccleuch and his clan on the other, in sight of the young King James V., the possession of whose person was the object of the contest. This battle is often mentioned in the Border Minstrelsy, and the reader will find a long note on it, under the lines which I have just quoted from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. In the names of various localities between Melrose and Abbotsford, such as *Skirmish-field*, *Charge-Law*, and so forth, the incidents of the fight have found a lasting record; and the spot where the retainer of Buccleuch terminated the pursuit of the victors by the mortal wound of Kerr of Cessford (ancestor to the Dukes of Roxburghe) has always been called *Turn-again*. In his own future domain the young minstrel had before him the scene of the last great clan-battle of the Borders.

On the 12th of May, 1811, he writes to James Ballantyne, apologizing for some delay about proof-sheets. "My attention," he adds, "has been a little dissipated by considering a plan for my own future comfort, which I hasten to mention to you. My lease of Ashestiel is out—I now sit a tenant at will under a heavy rent, and at all the inconvenience of one when in the house of another. I have therefore resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, but both would make a very desirable property indeed. They stretch along the Tweed near half-way between Melrose and Selkirk, on the opposite side from Lord Somerville, and could be had for between £7,000 and £8,000—or either separate for about half the sum. I have serious thoughts of one or both, and must have recourse to my pen to make the matter easy. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copyright of a new poem; supposing it to be made payable within a year at farthest from the work going to press,—which would be essential to my purpose. Yet the Lady of the Lake came soon home. I have a letter this morning giving me good hope of my Treasury business being carried through; if this takes place, I will buy both the little farms, which will give me a mile of the beautiful turn of Tweed, above Galafoot; if not, I will confine myself to one. As my income in the event supposed will be very considerable, it will afford a sinking fund to clear off what debt I may incur in making this purchase. It is proper John and you should be as soon as possible apprised of these my intentions, which I believe you will think reasonable in my situation and at my

age, while I yet hope to sit under the shade of a tree of my own planting. I shall not, I think, want any pecuniary assistance beyond what I have noticed, but of course my powers of rendering it will be considerably limited for a time. I hope this Register will give a start to its predecessors; I assure you I shall spare no pains. John must lend his earnest attention to clear his hands of the quire stock, and to taking in as little as he can unless in the way of exchange; in short, reefing our sails, which are at present too much spread for our ballast."

He alludes in the same letter to a change in the firm of Messrs. Constable, which John Ballantyne had just announced to him; and, although some of his prognostications on this business were not exactly fulfilled, I must quote his expressions for the light they throw on his opinion of Constable's temper and character. "No association," he says, "of the kind Mr. C. proposes will stand two years with him for its head. His temper is too haughty to bear with the complaints, and to answer all the minute inquiries, which partners of that sort will think themselves entitled to make, and expect to have answered. Their first onset, however, will be terrible, and John must be prepared to lie by. . . . The new poem would help the presses." The new partners to which he refers were Mr. Robert Cathcart, Writer to the Signet, a man of high worth and integrity, who continued to be connected with Constable's business until his death in November, 1812, and Mr. Robert Cadell, who afterwards married Mr. Constable's eldest daughter.\*

Of the two adjoining farms, both of which he had at this time thought of purchasing, he shortly afterwards made up his mind that one would be sufficient to begin with; and he selected that nearest to Ashestiel, and comprising the scene of Cessford's slaughter. The person from whom he bought it was an old friend of his own, whose sterling worth he venerated, and whose humorous conversation rendered him an universal favourite among the gentry of the Forest—the late Rev. Dr. Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels—the same man to whom Mrs. Cockburn described the juvenile prodigy of George's Square, in November, 1777. Dr. Douglas had never resided on the property, and his efforts to embellish it had been limited to one stripe of firs, so long and so narrow that Scott likened it to a black hair-comb. It ran from the precincts of the homestead towards *Turn-again*, and has bequeathed the name of *the Doctor's Redding-kame* to the mass of nobler trees amidst which its dark straight line can now hardly be traced. The farm consisted of a rich meadow or haugh along the banks of the river, and about a hundred acres of undulated ground behind, all in a neglected state, undrained, wretchedly enclosed, much of it covered with nothing better than the native heath. The farmhouse itself was small and poor, with a common *kail-yard* on one flank, and a staring barn of the Doctor's erection on the other, while in front appeared a filthy pond covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*. But the Tweed was everything to him—a beautiful river flowing broad and bright over a bed of milk-white peb-

\* This union was dissolved by the death of the lady within a year of the marriage. Mr. Cadell, not long after the catastrophe of 1828, became sole publisher of Scott's later works.

bles, unless here and there where it darkened into a deep pool, overhung as yet only by the birches and alders which had survived the statelier growth of the primitive forest; and the first hour that he took possession he claimed for his farm the name of the adjoining *ford*, situated just above the influx of the classical tributary Gala. As might be guessed from the name of *Abbotsford*, these lands had all belonged of old to the great Abbey of Melrose, and indeed the Duke of Buccleuch, as the territorial representative of that religious brotherhood, still retains some seigniorial rights over them and almost all the surrounding district. Another feature of no small interest in Scott's eyes was an ancient Roman road leading from the Eildon Hills to this ford, the remains of which, however, are now mostly sheltered from view amidst his numerous plantations. The most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland, the Abbey of Melrose itself, is visible from many points in the immediate neighbourhood of the house; and last, not least, on the rising ground full in view across the river, the traveller may still observe the chief traces of that ancient British barrier, the *Catrail*, of which the reader has seen mention in one of Scott's early letters to Ellis, when investigating the antiquities of Reged and Strathclyde.

Such was the territory on which Scott's prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures, embosomed among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the founder. But the state of his feelings, when he first called these fields his own will be best illustrated by a few extracts from his letters. To his brother-in-law, Mr. Carpenter, he thus writes, from Ashiestiel, on the 5th of August:—

"As my lease of this place is out, I have bought, for about £4,000, a property in the neighbourhood, extending along the banks of the river Tweed for about half a mile. It is very bleak at present, having little to recommend it but the vicinity of the river; but as the ground is well adapted by nature to grow wood, and is considerably various in form and appearance, I have no doubt that by judicious plantations it may be rendered a very pleasant spot; and it is at present my great amusement to plan the various lines which may be necessary for that purpose. The farm comprehends about a hundred acres, of which I shall keep fifty in pasture and tillage, and plant all the rest, which will be a very valuable little possession in a few years, as wood bears a high price among us. I intend building a small cottage here for my summer abode, being obliged by law, as well as induced by inclination, to make this country my residence for some months every year. This is the greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady of Abbotsford*. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes, and drink whiskey punch. Now as this happy festival is to be deferred for more than a twelvemonth, during which our cottage is to be built, &c., &c., what is there to hinder brother and sister Carpenter from giving us their company upon so gratifying an occasion? Pray do not stay broiling yourself in India for a moment longer than you have secured comfort and competence. Don't look forward to *peace*; it will never come either in your day or mine."

The same week he says to Joanna Baillie:—

"My dreams about my cottage go on; of about a hundred acres I have manfully resolved to plant from sixty to seventy; as to my scale of dwelling, why, you shall see my plan when I have adjusted it. My present intention is to have only two spare bed-rooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which will on a pinch have a couch bed; but I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cousins and *dunriwastles*, who will rather sleep on chairs, and on the floor, and in the hay-loft, than be absent when folks are gathered together; and truly I used to think Ashestiel was very much like the tent of Paribanou, in the Arabian Nights, that suited alike all numbers of company equally; ten people fill it at any time, and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any complaint. As for the *go-about* folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; for you who are always in the way of seeing, and commanding, and selecting your society, are too fastidious to understand how a dearth of news may make anybody welcome that can tell one the current report of the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I never heard of a stranger that utterly baffled all efforts to engage him in conversation, excepting one whom an acquaintance of mine met in a stage coach. My friend,\* who piqued himself on his talents for conversation, assailed this tortoise on all hands, but in vain, and at length descended to expostulation. 'I have talked to you, my friend, on all the ordinary subjects—literature, farming, merchandise—gaming, game laws, horse-races—suits at law—politics, and swindling, and blasphemy, and philosophy—is there any one subject that you will favour me by opening upon?' The wight writhed his countenance into a grin. 'Sir,' said he, 'can you say anything clever about *bend leather*?' There, I own, I should have been as much nonplussed as my acquaintance; but upon any less abstruse subject, I think, in general, something may be made of a stranger, worthy of his clean sheets, and beef-steak, and glass of port. You, indeed, my dear friend, may suffer a little for me, as I should for you, when such a fortuitous acquaintance talks of the intercourse arising from our meeting as anything beyond the effect of chance and civility; but these braggings break no bones, and are always a compliment to the person of whom the discourse is held, though the narrator means it to himself; for no one can suppose the affectation of intimacy can be assumed unless from an idea that it exalts the person who brags of it. My little folks are well, and I am performing the painful duty of hearing my little boy his Latin lesson every morning; painful, because my knowledge of the language is more familiar than grammatical, and because little Walter has a disconsolate yawn at intervals which is quite irresistible, and has nearly cost me a dislocation of my jaws."

In answering the letter which announced the acquisition of Abbotsford, Joanna Baillie says very prettily:—"Yourself, and Mrs. Scott, and the children, will feel sorry at leaving Ashestiel, which will long have a consequence, and be the object of kind feelings with many, from having been the place of your residence. If I should ever be happy enough to

\* This friend was Mr. William Clerk.

be at Abbotsford, you must take me to see Ashestiel too. I have a kind of tenderness for it, as one has for a man's first wife, when you hear he has married a second." The same natural sentiment is expressed in a manner characteristically different, in a letter from the Ettrick Shepherd, of about the same date:—"Are you not sorry at leaving *auld Ashestiel* for *gude an' a'*, after having been at so much trouble and expense in making it a complete thing? Upon my word I was, on seeing it in the papers."

That Scott had many a pang in quitting a spot which had been the scene of so many innocent and noble pleasures, no one can doubt; but the desire of having a permanent abiding-place of his own, in his ancestral district, had long been growing upon his mind; and, moreover, he had laboured in adorning Ashestiel, not only to gratify his own taste as a landscape gardener, but because he had for years been looking forward to the day when Colonel (now General) Russell would return from India to claim possession of his romantic inheritance. And he was overpaid for all his exertions, when the gallant soldier sat down at length among the trees which an affectionate kinsman had pruned and planted in his absence. He retained, however, to the end of his life, a certain "tenderness of feeling" towards Ashestiel, which could not perhaps be better shadowed than in Joanna Baillie's similitude. It was not his first country residence—nor could its immediate landscape be said to equal the Vale of the Esk, either in actual picturesqueness, or (before Marmion) in dignity of association. But it was while occupying Ashestiel that he first enjoyed habitually the free presence of wild and solitary nature; and I shall here quote part of a letter, in which he alludes to his favourite wildernesses between Tweed and Yarrow, in language, to my mind, strongly indicative of the regrets and misgivings with which he must have taken his farewell wanderings over them in the summer and autumn of 1811.

Miss Baillie had then in the press a new volume of tragedies, but had told her friend that the publication, for booksellers' reasons, would not take place until winter. He answers (August 24th):—"Were it possible for me to hasten the treat I expect by such a composition with you, I would promise to read the volume at the silence of noonday, upon the top of Minchmuir, or Windlestrawlaw. The hour is allowed, by those skilful in demonology, to be as full of witching as midnight itself; and I assure you, I have felt really oppressed with a sort of fearful loneliness, when looking around the naked and towering ridges of desolate barrenness, which is all the eye takes in from the top of such a mountain—the patches of cultivation being all hidden in the little glens and valleys—or only appearing to make one sensible how feeble and inefficient the efforts of art have been to contend with the genius of the soil. It is in such a scene that the unknown author of a fine but unequal poem, called *Albania*, places the remarkable superstition which consists in hearing the noise of a chase, with the baying of the hounds, the throttling sobs of the deer, the halloos of a numerous band of huntsmen, and the 'hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.' I have often repeated his verses with some sensations of awe in such a place, and I am sure yours would effect their purpose as completely."

Miss Baillie sent him, as soon it was printed, the book to which this

communication refers; she told him it was to be her last publication, and that she was getting her knitting-needles in order—meaning to begin her new course of industry with a purse, by way of return for his Iona brooch. The poetess mentioned, at the same time, that she had met the evening before with a Scotch lady, who boasted that “she had once been Walter Scott’s bedfellow.” “Don’t start,” adds Joanna, “it is thirty years since the irregularity took place, and she describes her old bedfellow as the drollest-looking, entertaining little urchin that ever was seen. I told her that you are a great strong man, six feet high, but she does not believe me.” In point of fact, the assigned date was a lady’s one; for the irregularity in question occurred on board the Leith smack which conveyed Walter Scott to London on his way to Bath, when he was only four years of age, A.D. 1775.

Miss Baillie’s welcome volume contained, among others, her tragedy on the Passion of Fear; and Scott gives much of himself in the letter acknowledging this present.

*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—

“ . . . It is too little to say I am enchanted with the said third volume, especially with the two first plays, which in every point not only sustain, but even exalt your reputation as a dramatist. The whole character of Orra is exquisitely supported as well as imagined, and the language distinguished by a rich variety of fancy, which I know no instance of excepting in Shakespeare. After I had read Orra twice to myself, Terry read it over to us a third time, aloud, and I have seldom seen a little circle so much affected as during the whole fifth act. I think it would act charmingly, omitting, perhaps, the baying of the hounds, which could not be happily imitated, and retaining only the blast of the horn and the halloo of the huntsmen at a distance. Only I doubt if we have now an actress that could carry through the mad scene in the fifth act, which is certainly one of the most sublime that ever were written. Yet I have a great quarrel with this beautiful drama, for you must know you have utterly destroyed a song of mine, precisely in the turn of your outlaw’s ditty, and sung by persons in somewhat the same situation. I took out my unfortunate manuscript to look at it, but alas! it was the encounter of the iron and the earthen pitchers in the fable. I was clearly sunk, and the potsherds not worth gathering up. But only conceive that the chorus should have run thus *verbatim*—

“ ‘Tis mirk midnight with perfect men,  
With us ‘tis dawn of day’—

“And again—

“ ‘Then boot and saddle, comrades boon,  
Nor wait the dawn of day.’ ”

\* These lines were accordingly struck out of the outlaw’s song in *Rokeby*. The verses of Orra, to which Scott alludes, are no doubt the following:—

“The wild-fire dances on the fen,  
The red star sheds its ray,  
Up rouse ye, then, my merry men,  
It is our opening day,” &c.

*Plays on the Passions, vol. iii. p. 44.*

\* \* \* \* \*

"To return, I really think *Fear* the most dramatic passion you have hitherto touched, because capable of being drawn to the most extreme paroxysm on the stage. In Orra you have all gradations, from a timidity excited by a strong and irritable imagination, to the extremity which altogether unhinges the understanding. The most dreadful fright I ever had in my life (being neither constitutionally timid nor in the way of being exposed to real danger) was in returning from Hampstead the day which I spent so pleasantly with you. Although the evening was nearly closed, I foolishly chose to take the short cut through the fields, and in that enclosure where the path leads close by a thick and high hedge—with several gaps in it, however—did I meet one of your very thorough-paced London ruffians, at least judging from the squalid and jail-bird appearance and blackguard expression of countenance. Like the man that met the devil, I had nothing to say to him, if he had nothing to say to me, but I could not help looking back to watch the movements of such a suspicious figure, and, to my great uneasiness, saw him creep through the hedge on my left hand. I instantly went to the first gap to watch his motions, and saw him stooping, as I thought, either to lift a bundle or to speak to some person who seemed lying in the ditch. Immediately after he came cowering back up the opposite side of the hedge, as returning towards me under cover of it. I saw no weapons he had, except a stick, but as I moved on to gain the stile which was to let me into the free field—with the idea of a wretch springing upon me from the cover at every step I took—I assure you I would not wish the worst enemy I ever had to undergo such a feeling as I had for about five minutes: my fancy made him of that description which usually combines murder with plunder, and though I was well armed with a stout stick and a very formidable knife, which when opened becomes a sort of *skene-dhu* or dagger, I confess my sensations, though those of a man much resolved not to die like a sheep, were vilely short of heroism; so much so, that when I jumped over the stile, a sliver of the wood run a third or an inch between my nail and flesh without my feeling the pain, or being sensible such a thing had happened. However, I saw my man no more, and it is astonishing how my spirits rose when I got into the open field, and when I reached the top of the little mount, and all the bells in London (for aught I know) began to jingle at once, I thought I had never heard anything so delightful in my life—so rapid are the alterations of our feelings. This foolish story—for perhaps I had no rational ground for the horrible feeling which possessed my mind for a little while—came irresistibly to my pen when writing to you on the subject of terror. \* \* \* \* \*

"Pray make my remembrance to the lady who so kindly remembers our early intimacy. I do perfectly remember being an exceedingly spoiled, chattering monkey, whom indifferent health and the cares of a kind grandmamma and aunt had made, I suspect, extremely abominable to everybody who had not a great deal of sympathy and good-nature, which I daresay was the case of my *quondam* bedfellow, since she recollects me so favourably. Farewell, and believe me faithfully and respectfully,  
your sincere friend,

"WALTER SCOTT."

Miss Baillie, in her next letter, mentioned the name of the "old bed-fellow," and that immediately refreshed Scott's recollection. "I do," he replies, "remember *Miss Wright* perfectly well. Oh, how I should like to talk over with her *our* voyage in the good ship the *Duchess of Buccleuch*, Captain Beatson, master; much of which, from the novelty doubtless of the scene, is strongly impressed on my memory. A long voyage it was—of twelve days, if I mistake not, with the variety of a day or two in Yarmouth Roads. I believe the passengers had a good deal of fun with me; for I remember being persuaded to shoot one of them with an air-gun, who, to my great terror, lay obstinately dead on the deck, and would not revive till I fell a-crying, which proved the remedy specific upon the occasion."

The mention of Mr. Terry, in the letter about Orra, reminds me to observe that Scott's intimacy with that gentleman began to make very rapid progress from the date of the first purchase of Abbotsford. He spent several weeks of that autumn at Ashiestiel, riding over daily to the new farm, and assisting his friend with advice, which his acquisitions as an architect and draughtsman rendered exceedingly valuable, as to the future arrangements about both house and grounds. Early in 1812 Terry proceeded to London, and made, on the 20th May, a very successful *début* on the boards of the Haymarket as Lord Ogleby. He continued, however, to visit Scotland almost every season, and no ally had more to do either with the plans ultimately adopted as to Scott's new structure, or with the collection of literary and antiquarian curiosities which now constitute its museum. From this time the series of letters between them is an ample one. The intelligent zeal with which the actor laboured to promote the gratification of the poet's tastes and fancies on the one side; on the other, Scott's warm anxiety for Terry's professional success, the sagacity and hopefulness with which he counsels and cheers him throughout, and the good-natured confidence with which he details his own projects; both the greatest and the smallest, all this seems to me to make up a very interesting picture. To none of his later correspondents, with the one exception of Mr. Morritt, does Scott write with a more perfect easy-heartedness than to Terry; and the quaint dramatic turns and allusions with which these letters abound will remind all who knew him of the instinctive courtesy with which he uniformly adopted in conversation a strain the most likely to fall in with the habits of any companion. It has been mentioned that his acquaintance with Terry sprung from Terry's familiarity with the Ballantynes; as it ripened, he had, in fact, learned to consider the ingenious comedian as another brother of that race; and Terry, transplanted to the south, was used and trusted by him, and continued to serve and communicate with him, very much as if one of themselves had found it convenient to establish his head-quarters in London.

On the 28th of August, 1811, John Leyden died. On the 25th he, having accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Minto, on the expedition against Java, dashed into the surf, that he might be the first Briton in the armament who should set foot on the island. "When," says Scott, in his *Sketch of Leyden's Life*, "the well-concerted movements of the invaders had given them possession of the town of Batavia, he displayed the same ill-omened precipitation in his haste to examine a library, or

rather warehouse of books, in which many Indian MSS. of value were said to be deposited. The apartment had not been regularly ventilated, and either from this circumstance, or already affected by the fatal sickness peculiar to Batavia, Leyden, when he left the place, had a fit of shivering, and declared the atmosphere was enough to give any mortal a fever. The presage was too just: he took to his bed and died in three days, on the eve of the battle which gave Java to the British empire—

“‘Grata quies patriæ, sed et omnis terra sepulchrum.’”

Of the £4,000 which Scott paid for the original farm of Abbotsford, he borrowed one-half from his eldest brother, Major John Scott; the other moiety was raised by the Ballantynes, and advanced on the security of the as yet unwritten though long-meditated poem of Rokeby. He immediately, I believe by Terry's counsel, requested Mr. Stark of Edinburgh, an architect of whose talents he always spoke warmly, to give him a design for an ornamental cottage in the style of the old English vicarage-house. But before this could be done, Mr. Stark died; and Scott's letters will show how, in the sequel, his building plans, checked for a season by this occurrence, gradually expanded until, twelve years afterwards, the site was occupied not by a cottage but a castle.

His first notions are sketched as follows, in a letter addressed to Mr. Morritt very shortly after the purchase:—“We stay at Ashestiel this season, but migrate the next to our new settlements. I have fixed only two points respecting my intended cottage: one is, that it shall be *in* my garden, or rather *kail-yard*; the other, that the little drawing-room shall open into a little conservatory, in which conservatory there shall be a fountain. These are articles of taste which I have long since determined upon, but I hope before a stone of my Paradise is begun we shall meet and colloque upon it.”

Three months later (December 20th, 1811) he opens the design of his poem in another letter to the Lord of Rokeby.

“And now I have a grand project to tell you of. Nothing less than a fourth romance in verse; the theme, during the English civil wars of Charles I., and the scene, your own domain of Rokeby. I want to build my cottage a little better than my limited finances will permit out of my ordinary income; and although it is very true than an author should not hazard his reputation, yet, as Bob Acres says, I really think Reputation should take some care of the gentleman in return. Now, I have all your scenery deeply imprinted in my memory, and, moreover, be it known to you, I intend to refresh its traces this ensuing summer, and to go as far as the borders of Lancashire, and the caves of Yorkshire, and so perhaps on to Derbyshire. I have sketched a story which pleases me, and I am only anxious to keep my theme quiet, for its being piddled upon by some of your *ready-to-catch* literati, as John Bunyan calls them, would be a serious misfortune to me. I am not without hope of seducing you to be my guide a little way on my tour. Is there not some book (sense or nonsense, I care not) on the beauties of Teesdale—I mean a descriptive work? If you can point it out or lend it me, you will do me a great favour, and no less if you can tell me any traditions of the period. By which party was Barnard Castle occupied? It strikes me that it

should be held for the Parliament. Pray help me in this—by truth, or fiction, or tradition—I care not which, if it be picturesque. What the deuce is the name of that wild glen where we had such a clamber on horseback up a stone staircase?—Cat's Cradle, or Cat's Castle, I think it was. I wish also to have the true edition of the traditional tragedy of your old house at Mortham, and the ghost thereunto appertaining, and you will do me yeoman's service in compiling the relics of so valuable a legend. Item—Do you know anything of a striking ancient castle belonging, I think, to the Duke of Leeds, called Comingsburgh? Grose notices it, but in a very flimsy manner. I once flew past it on the mail-coach, when its round tower and flying buttresses had a most romantic effect in the morning dawn.

"The Quarterly is beyond my praise, and as much beyond it as I was beyond that of my poor old nurse who died the other day. Sir John Sinclair has gotten the golden fleece at last. Dogberry would not desire a richer reward for having been written down an ass. £6,000 a year! Good faith, the whole reviews in Britain should rail at me, with my free consent, better cheap by at least a cypher. There is no chance, with all my engagements, to be at London this spring. My little boy Walter is ill with the measles, and I expect the rest to catch the disorder, which appears, thank God, very mild. Mrs. Scott joins in kindest compliments to Mrs. Morritt, many merry Christmases to you, and believe me truly yours,  
"WALTER SCOTT."

In January, 1812, Scott entered upon the enjoyment of his proper salary as a Clerk of Session, which, with his sheriffdom, gave him from this time till very near the close of his life a professional income of £1,600 a year. On the 11th of the same month he lost his kind friend and first patron, Henry, third Duke of Buccleuch, and fifth of Queensberry. Both these events are mentioned in the following letter to Joanna Baillie, who, among other things, had told Scott that the materials for his purse were now on her table, and expressed her anxiety to know who was the author of some beautiful lines on the recent death of their friend, James Grahame, the poet of the Sabbath. These verses had, it appears, found their way anonymously into the newspapers.

*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"January 17th, 1812.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"The promise of the purse has flattered my imagination so very agreeably, that I cannot help sending you an ancient silver mouthpiece, to which, if it pleases your taste, you may adapt your intended labours: this, besides, is a genteel way of tying you down to your promise; and to bribe you still further, I assure you it shall not be put to the purpose of holding bank notes or vulgar bullion, but reserved as a place of deposit for some of my pretty little medals and nicknatories. When I do make another poetical effort, I shall certainly expect the sum you mention from the booksellers, for they have had too good bargains of me hitherto, and I fear I shall want a great deal of money to make my cottage exactly what I should like it. Meanwhile, between ourselves, my income has been very much increased since I wrote to you, in a different way. My pre-

decessor in the office of Clerk of Session retired to make room for me, on the amiable condition of retaining all the emoluments during his life, which, from my wish to retire from the bar and secure a certain though distant income, I was induced to consent to; and considering his advanced age and uncertain health, the bargain was really not a bad one. But alas! like Sindbad's Old Man of the Sea, my coadjutor's strength increased prodigiously after he had fairly settled himself on my shoulders, so that after five years' gratuitous labour I began to tire of my burden. Fortunately, Mr. Banks' late Superannuation Act provides a rateable pension for office-holders obliged to retire after long and faithful services; and my old friend very handsomely consented to be transferred from my galled shoulders to the broad back of the public, although he is likely to sustain a considerable diminution of income by the exchange, to which he has declared himself willing to submit as a penalty for having lived longer than he or I expected. To me it will make a difference of £1,300 a year; no trifle to us who have no wish to increase our expense in a single particular, and who could support it on our former income without inconvenience. This I tell you in confidence, because I know you will be very well pleased with any good fortune which comes in my way. Everybody who cares a farthing for poetry is delighted with your volume, and well they may. You will neither be shocked nor surprised at hearing that Mr. Jeffrey has announced himself of a contrary opinion. So, at least, I understand, for our very ideas of what is poetry differ so widely that we rarely talk upon these subjects. There is something in his mode of reasoning that leads me greatly to doubt whether, notwithstanding the vivacity of his imagination, he really has any *feeling* of poetical genius or whether he has worn it all off by perpetually sharpening his wit on the grindstone of criticism.

"I am very glad that you met my dear friend, George Ellis,—a wonderful man, who, through the life of a statesman and politician, conversing with princes, wits, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen, and acquainted with all the intrigues and *tracasseries* of the cabinets and *ruelles* of foreign Courts, has yet retained all warm and kindly feelings which render a man amiable in society, and the darling of his friends.

"The author of the elegy upon poor Grahame is John Wilson, a young man of very considerable poetical powers. He is now engaged in a poem called the *Isle of Palms*, something in the style of Southey. He is an eccentric genius, and has fixed himself upon the banks of Windermere, but occasionally resides in Edinburgh, where he now is. Perhaps you have seen him; his father was a wealthy Paisley manufacturer, his mother a sister of Robert Sym. He seems an excellent, warm-hearted, and enthusiastic young man; something too much, perhaps, of the latter quality, places him among the list of originals.

"Our streets in Edinburgh are become as insecure as your houses in Wapping. Only think of a formal association among nearly fifty apprentices, aged from twelve to twenty, to scour the streets and knock down and rob all whom they found in their way. This they executed on the last night of the year with such spirit that two men have died, and several others are dangerously ill, from the wanton treatment they received. The watchword of these young heroes when they met with

resistance was *Mar him*<sup>3</sup>, a word of dire import; and which, as they were all armed with bludgeons loaded with lead, and were very savage, they certainly used in the sense of Ratchffe Highway. The worst of all this is not so much the immediate evil, which a severe example\* will probably check for the present, as that the formation and existence of such an association, holding regular meetings and keeping regular minutes, argues a woeful negligence in the masters of these boys, the tradesmen and citizens of Edinburgh, of that wholesome domestic discipline which they ought, in justice to God and to man, to exercise over the youth entrusted to their charge; a negligence which cannot fail to be productive of every sort of vice, crime, and folly, among boys of that age.

"Yesterday I had the melancholy task of attending the funeral of the good old Duke of Buccleuch. It was, by his own direction, very private; but scarce a dry eye among the assistants—a rare tribute to a person whose high rank and large possessions removed him so far out of the social sphere of private friendship. But the Duke's mind was moulded upon the kindest and most single-hearted model, and arrested the affections of all who had any connection with him. He is truly a great loss to Scotland, and will be long missed and lamented, though the successor to his rank is heir also to his generous spirit and affections. He was my kind friend. Ever yours,

"W. SCOTT."

The next of his letters to Joanna Baillie is curious, as giving his first impressions on reading *Childe Harold*.

"Have you seen the *Pilgrimage of Childe Harold*, by Lord Byron? It is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer's heart or morals; his hero, notwithstanding the affected antiquity of the style in some parts, is a modern man of fashion and fortune, worn out and satiated with the pursuits of dissipation, and although there is a caution against it in the preface, you cannot for your soul avoid concluding that the author, as he gives an account of his own travels, is also doing so in his own character. Now really this is too bad; vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence at least equal to the noble lord's other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the *ennui* arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. There is a monstrous deal of conceit in it too, for it is informing the inferior part of the world that their little old-fashioned scruples of limitation are not worthy of his regard, while his fortune and possessions are such as have put all sorts of gratifications too much in his power to afford him any pleasure. Yet with all this conceit and assurance there is much poetical merit in the book, and I wish you would read it."

Lord Byron was, I need not say, the prime object of interest this season in the fashionable world of London; nor did the Prince Regent owe the subsequent hostilities of the noble poet to any neglect on his part of the brilliant genius which had just been fully revealed in the *Childe Harold*. Mr. Murray, the publisher of the *Romaunt*, on hearing, on the 29th of

\* Three of these lads, all under eighteen years of age, were executed on the scene of one of the murders here alluded to, April the 22nd, 1812. Their youth and penitence excited the deepest compassion, but never certainly was a severe example more necessary.

June, Lord Byron's account of his introduction to his Royal Highness, conceived that, by communicating it to Scott, he might afford the opportunity of such a personal explanation between his two poetical friends, as should obliterate on both sides whatever painful feelings had survived the offensive allusions to Marmion in the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and this good-natured step had the desired consequences. Mr. Moore says that the correspondence "began in some inquiries which Mr. Scott addressed to Lord Byron on the subject of his interview with Royalty;" but he would not have used that expression, had he seen the following letter:—

"MY LORD,—

"I am uncertain if I ought to profit by the apology which is afforded me, by a very obliging communication from our acquaintance, John Murray of Fleet Street, to give your lordship the present trouble. But my intrusion concerns a large debt of gratitude due to your lordship, and a much less important one of explanation, which I think I owe to myself, as I dislike standing low in the opinion of any person whose talents rank so highly in my own, as your lordship's most deservedly do.

"The first *count*, as our technical language expresses it, relates to the high pleasure I have received from the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, and from its precursors; the former, with all its classical associations, some of which are lost on so poor a scholar as I am, possesses the additional charm of vivid and animated description, mingled with original sentiment;—but besides this debt, which I owe your lordship in common with the rest of the reading public, I have to acknowledge my particular thanks for your having distinguished by praise, in the work which your lordship rather dedicated in general to satire, some of my own literary attempts. And this leads me to put your lordship right in the circumstances respecting the sale of Marmion, which had reached you in a distorted and misrepresented form, and which, perhaps, I have some reason to complain, were given to the public without more particular inquiry. The poem, my lord, was *not* written upon contract for a sum of money—though it is too true that it was sold and published in a very unfinished state, which I have since regretted, to enable me to extricate myself from some engagements which fell suddenly upon me, by the unexpected misfortunes of a very near relation. So that, to quote statute and precedent, I really come under the case cited by Juvenal, though not quite in the extremity of the classic author—

"*Esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.*

"And so much for a mistake into which your lordship might easily fall, especially as I generally find it the easiest way of stopping sentimental compliments on the beauty, &c., of certain poetry, and the delights which the author must have taken in the composition, by assigning the readiest reason that will cut the discourse short, upon a subject where one must appear either conceited or affectedly rude and cynical.

"As for my attachment to literature, I sacrificed for the pleasure of pursuing it very fair chances of opulence and professional honours, at a

time of life when I fully knew their value ; and I am not ashamed to say, that in deriving advantages in compensation from the partial favour of the public, I have added some comforts and elegancies to a bare independence. I am sure your lordship's good sense will easily put this unimportant egotism to the right account ; for, though I do not know the motive would make me enter into controversy with a fair or an *unfair* literary critic, I may be well excused for a wish to clear my personal character from any tinge of mercenary or sordid feeling in the eyes of a contemporary genius. Your lordship will likewise permit me to add that you would have escaped the trouble of this explanation had I not understood that the satire alluded to had been suppressed, not to be reprinted. For in removing a prejudice on your lordship's own mind, I had no intention of making any appeal by or through you to the public, since my own habits of life have rendered my defence as to avarice or rapacity rather too easy.

"Leaving this foolish matter where it lies, I have to request your lordship's acceptance of my best thanks for the flattering communication which you took the trouble to make Mr. Murray on my behalf, and which could not fail to give me the gratification which I am sure you intended. I daresay our worthy bibliopoliſt over-coloured his report of your lordship's conversation with the Prince Regent, but I owe my thanks to him nevertheless for the excuse he has given me for intruding these pages on your lordship. Wishing you health, spirit, and perseverance to continue your pilgrimage through the interesting countries which you have still to pass with Childe Harold, I have the honour to be, my lord, your lordship's obedient servant,

"WALTER SCOTT.

"P.S.—Will your lordship permit me a verbal criticism on Childe Harold, were it only to show I have read his Pilgrimage with attention ? *Nuestra Dama de la Peña* means, I suspect, not Our Lady of Crime or Punishment, but Our Lady of the Cliff ; the difference is, I believe, merely in the accentuation of *peña*."

Lord Byron's answer was in these terms :—

*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"St. James's Street, July 6, 1812.

"SIR,—

"I have just been honoured with your letter. I feel sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the evil works of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your praise ; and now, waiving myself, let me talk to you of the Prince Regent. He ordered me to be presented to him at a ball ; and after some sayings, peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts, he talked to me of you and your immortality ; he preferred you to every bard past and present, and asked which of your works pleased me most. It was a difficult question. I answered I thought the Lay. He said his own opinion was nearly similar. In speaking of the others, I told him that I thought you more

particularly the poet of *Princes*, as *they* never appeared more fascinating than in *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your Jameses as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with both ; so that (with the exception of the Turks and your humble servant) you were in very good company. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness's opinion of your powers, nor can I pretend to enumerate all he said on the subject ; but it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it, and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living gentleman.

"This interview was accidental. I never went to the *levée*, for, having seen the Courts of Mussulman and Catholic sovereigns, my curiosity was sufficiently allayed, and my politics being as perverse as my rhymes, I had, in fact, no business there. To be thus praised by your sovereign must be gratifying to you ; and if that gratification is not alloyed by the communication being made through me, the-bearer of it will consider himself very fortunately, and sincerely, your obliged and obedient servant,

"BYRON.

"P.S.—Excuse this scrawl, scratched in a great hurry, and just after a journey."

From this time the epistolary intercourse between Scott and Byron continued to be kept up ; and it ere long assumed a tone of friendly confidence equally honourable to both these great competitors, without rivalry, for the favour of the literary world.

This letter immediately preceded Scott's second meeting with another of the most illustrious of his contemporaries. He had met Davy at Mr. Wordsworth's when in the first flush of his celebrity in 1804, and been, as one of his letters states, much delighted with "the simple and unaffected style of his bearing—the most agreeable characteristic of high genius." Sir Humphrey, now at the summit of his fame, had come, by his marriage with Scott's accomplished relation, into possession of an ample fortune ; and he and his bride were among the first of the poet's visitants in the original cabin at Abbotsford.

## CHAPTER X.

ABBOTSFORD—ROKEBY AND BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN—AFFAIRS OF  
BALLANTYNES—DIFFICULTIES FOR MONEY.

TOWARDS the end of May, 1812, the Sheriff finally removed from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. The day when this occurred was a sad one for many a poor neighbour—for they lost, both in him and his wife, very generous protectors. In such a place, among the few evils which counterbalance so many good things in the condition of the peasantry, the most afflicting is the want of access to medical advice. As far as their means and skill would go, they had both done their utmost to supply this want; and Mrs. Scott, in particular, had made it so much her business to visit the sick in their scattered cottages, and bestowed on them the contents of her medicine-chest, as well as of the larder and cellar, with such unwearied kindness, that her name is never mentioned there to this day without some expression of tenderness. Scott's children remember the parting scene as one of unmixed affliction; but it had had, as we shall see, its lighter features.

Among the many amiable English friends whom he owed to his frequent visits at Rokeby Park, there was, I believe, none that had a higher place in his regard than the late Anne Lady Alvanley, the widow of the celebrated Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He was fond of female society in general; but her ladyship was a woman after his heart; well born and highly bred, but without the slightest tinge of the frivolities of modern fashion; soundly informed, and a warm lover of literature and the arts, but holding in as great horror as himself the imbecile chatter and affected ecstasies of the blue-stocking generation. Her ladyship had written to him early in May, by Miss Sarah Smith (now Mrs. Bartley), whom I have already mentioned as one of his theatrical favourites; and his answer contains, among other matters, a sketch of the "Forest Flitting."

*To the Right Honourable Lady Alvanley.*

"Ashestiel, 25th May, 1812.

"I was honoured, my dear Lady Alvanley, by the kind letter which you sent me with our friend Miss Smith, whose talents are, I hope, receiving at Edinburgh the full meed of honourable applause which they so highly merit. It is very much against my will that I am forced to speak of them by report alone, for this being the term of removing, I am under the necessity of being at this farm to superintend the transference of my goods and chattels, a most miscellaneous collection, to a small property, about five miles down the Tweed, which I purchased last year. The neighbours have been much delighted with the procession of my furniture,

in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux chevalier* of ancient Border fame; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged rosy peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading ponies, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gipsy groups of Callot upon their march."

This was one of the busiest summers of Scott's busy life. Till the 12th of July he was at his post in the Court of Session five days every week; but every Saturday evening found him at Abbotsford, to observe the progress his labourers had made within doors and without in his absence, and on Monday night he returned to Edinburgh. Even before the summer session commenced he appears to have made some advance in his *Rokeby*, for he writes to Mr. Morritt, from Abbotsford, on the 4th of May, "As for the house and the poem, there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other—so they are both in progress;" and his literary labours throughout the long vacation were continued under the same sort of disadvantage. That autumn he had, in fact, no room at all for himself. The only parlour which had been hammered into anything like habitable condition, served at once for dining-room, drawing-room, school-room, and study. A window looking to the river was kept sacred to his desk; an old bed-curtain was nailed up across the room close behind his chair, and there, whenever the spade, the dibble, or the chisel (for he took his full share in all the work on hand) was laid aside, he pursued his poetical tasks, apparently undisturbed and unannoyed by the surrounding confusion of masons and carpenters, to say nothing of the lady's small talk, the children's babble among themselves, or the repetition of their lessons. The truth, no doubt, was that when at his desk he did little more, as far as regarded *poetry*, than write down the lines which he had fashioned in his mind while pursuing his vocation as a planter, upon that bank which received originally, by way of joke, the title of *the thicket*. "I am now," he says to Ellis (Oct. 17), "adorning a patch of naked land with trees, *facturis nepotibus umbram*, for I shall never live to enjoy their shade myself otherwise than in the recumbent posture of Tityrus or Menalcas." But he did live to see *the thicket* deserve not only that name but a nobler one, and to fell with his own hand many a well-grown tree that he had planted there.

Another plantation of the same date, by his eastern boundary, was less successful. For this he had asked and received from his early friend, the Marchioness of Stafford, a supply of acorns from Trentham, and it was named in consequence *Sutherland Bower*; but the field-mice, in the course of the ensuing winter, contrived to root up and devour the whole of her ladyship's goodly benefaction. A third space had been set apart, and duly enclosed, for the reception of some Spanish chestnuts offered to him by an admirer established in merchandise at Seville; but that gentleman had not been a very knowing ally as to such matters, for when the chestnuts arrived it turned out that they had been boiled.

Scott writes thus to Terry, in September :—

"I am relieved of the labour of hearing Walter's lesson by a gallant son of the Church, who with one leg of wood and another of oak, walks to and fro from Melrose every day for that purpose. Pray stick to the dramatic work, and never suppose either that you can be intrusive, or that I can be uninterested in whatever concerns you. Yours,  
"W. S."

The tutor alluded to was Mr. George Thomson, son of the minister of Melrose, who, when the house afforded better accommodation, was and continued for many years to be domesticated at Abbotsford. Scott had always a particular tenderness towards persons afflicted with any bodily misfortune; and Thomson, whose leg had been amputated in consequence of a rough casualty of his boyhood, had a special share in his favour from the high spirit with which he refused at the time to betray the name of the companion that had occasioned his mishap, and continued ever afterwards to struggle against its disadvantages. Tall, vigorous, athletic, a dauntless horseman, and expert at the singlestick, George formed a valuable as well as picturesque addition to the *tail* of the new laird, who often said, "In the Dominie, like myself, accident has spoiled a capital lifeguardsman." His many oddities and eccentricities in no degree interfered with the respect due to his amiable feelings, upright principles, and sound learning; nor did *Dominie Thomson* at all quarrel in after times with the universal credence of the neighbourhood that he had furnished many features for the inimitable personage whose designation so nearly resembled his own; and if he has not yet "wagged his head" in a "pulpit o' his ain," he well knows it has not been so for want of earnest and long-continued intercession on the part of the author of *Guy Mannering*.

For many years Scott had accustomed himself to proceed in the composition of poetry along with that of prose essays of various descriptions; but it is a remarkable fact that he chose this period of perpetual noise and bustle, when he had not even a summer-house to himself, for the new experiment of carrying on two poems at the same time—and this too without suspending the heavy labour of his edition of Swift, to say nothing of the various lesser matters in which the Ballantynes were, from day to day, calling for the assistance of his judgment and his pen. In the same letter in which William Erskine acknowledges the receipt of the first four pages of *Rokeby*, he adverts also to the *Bridal of Triermain* as being already in rapid progress. The fragments of this second poem, inserted in the Register of the preceding year, had attracted considerable notice; the secret of their authorship had been well kept; and by some means, even in the shrewdest circles of Edinburgh, the belief had become prevalent that they proceeded not from Scott but from Erskine. Scott had no sooner completed his bargain as to the copyright of the unwritten *Rokeby*, than he resolved to pause from time to time in its composition, and weave those fragments into a shorter and lighter romance, executed in a different metre, and to be published anonymously, in a small pocket volume, as nearly as possible on the same day with the avowed quarto. He expected great amusement from the comparisons which the critics

would no doubt indulge themselves in drawing between himself and this humble candidate; and Erskine good-humouredly entered into the scheme, undertaking to do nothing which should effectually suppress the notion of his having set himself up as a modest rival to his friend. Nay, he suggested a further refinement, which in the sequel had no small share in the success of this little plot upon the sagacity of the reviewers. Having said that he much admired the opening of the first canto of *Rokeby*, Erskine adds, "I shall request your *accoucheur* to send me your *little Dugald* too as he gradually makes his progress. What I have seen is delightful. You are aware how difficult it is to form any opinion of a work, the general plan of which is unknown, transmitted merely in legs and wings as they are formed and feathered. Any remarks must be of the most minute and superficial kind, confined chiefly to the language, and other such subordinate matters. I shall be very much amused if the secret is kept and the knowing ones taken in. To prevent any discovery from your prose, what think you of putting down your ideas of what the preface ought to contain, and allowing me to write it over? And perhaps a quizzing review might be concocted."

This last hint was welcome; and among other parts of the preface to *Triermain* which threw out "the knowing ones," certain Greek quotations interspersed in it are now accounted for. Scott, on his part, appears to have studiously interwoven into the piece allusions to personal feelings and experiences more akin to his friend's history and character than to his own; and he did so still more largely, when repeating this experiment, in the introductory parts of *Harold the Dauntless*.

The same post which conveyed William Erskine's letter above quoted, brought him an equally wise and kind one from Mr. Morritt, in answer to a fresh application for some minute details about the scenery and local traditions of the Valley of the Tees. Scott had promised to spend part of this autumn at *Rokeby Park* himself; but now, busied as he was with his planting operations at home, and continually urged by Ballantyne to have the poem ready for publication by Christmas, he would willingly have trusted his friend's knowledge in place of his own observation and research. Mr. Morritt gave him in reply various particulars, which I need not here repeat, but added,—“I am really sorry, my dear Scott, at your abandonment of your kind intention of visiting *Rokeby*; and my sorrow is not quite selfish, for seriously I wish you could have come, if but for a few days, in order, on the spot, to settle accurately in your mind the localities of the new poem, and all their petty circumstances, of which there are many that would give interest and ornament to your descriptions. I am too much flattered by your proposal of inscribing the poem to me, not to accept it with gratitude and pleasure. I shall always feel your friendship as an honour: we all wish our honours to be permanent, and yours promises mine at least a fair chance of immortality. I hope, however, you will not be obliged to write in a hurry on account of the impatience of your booksellers. They are, I think, ill advised in their proceeding, for surely the book will be the more likely to succeed from not being forced prematurely into this critical world. Do not be persuaded to risk your established fame on this hazardous experiment. If you want a few hundreds independent: of

these booksellers, your credit is so very good, now that you have got rid of your Old Man of the Sea, that it is no great merit to trust you, and I happen at this moment to have five or six for which I have no sort of demand; so rather than be obliged to spur Pegasus beyond the power of pulling him up when he is going too fast, do consult your own judgment and set the midwives of the trade at defiance. Don't be scrupulous to the disadvantage of your Muse, and above all, be not offended at me for a proposition which is meant in the true spirit of friendship. I am more than ever anxious for your success. The Lady of the Lake more than succeeded; I think Don Roderick is less popular. I want this work to be another Lady at the least. Surely it would be worth your while for such an object to spend a week of your time, and a portion of your Old Man's salary, in a mail-coach flight hither, were it merely to renew your acquaintance with the country, and to rectify the little misconceptions of a cursory view. Ever affectionately yours,  
"J. B. S. M."

This appeal was not to be resisted. Scott, I believe, accepted Mr. Morritt's friendly offer so far as to ask his assistance in having some of Ballantyne's bills discounted; and he proceeded the week after to Rokeby, by the way of Flodden and Hexham, travelling on horseback, his eldest boy and girl on their ponies, while Mrs. Scott followed them in the carriage. Two little incidents that diversified this ride through Northumberland have found their way into print already; but, as he was fond of telling them both down to the end of his days, I must give them a place here also. Halting at Flodden to expound the field of battle to his young folks, he found that Marmion had, as might have been expected, benefited the keeper of the public house there very largely; and the village Boniface, overflowing with gratitude, expressed his anxiety to have a *Scott's Head* for his sign-post. The poet demurred to this proposal, and assured mine host that nothing could be more appropriate than the portraiture of a foaming tankard, which already surmounted his doorway. "Why, the painter-man has not made an ill job," said the landlord, "but I would fain have something more connected with the book that has brought me so much good custom." He produced a well-thumbed copy, and handing it to the author, begged he would at least suggest a motto from the Tale of Flodden Field. Scott opened the book at the death scene of the hero, and his eye was immediately caught by the "inscription" in black letter,—

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink, and pray  
For the kind soul of Sibyl Gray," &c.

"Well, my friend," said he, "what more would you have? You need but strike out one letter in the first of these lines, and make your painter-man, the next time he comes this way, print between the jolly tankard and your own name—

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink, and PAY."

Scott was delighted to find, on his return, that this suggestion had been adopted, and for aught I know the romantic legend may still be visible. The other story I shall give in the words of Mr. Gillies. "It happened at a small country town that Scott suddenly required medical advice for

one of his servants, and on inquiring if there was any doctor at the place was told that there were two—one long established, and the other a new comer. The latter gentleman, being luckily found at home, soon made his appearance,—a grave, sagacious-looking personage, attired in black, with a shovel hat, in whom, to his utter astonishment, Sir Walter recognized a Scotch blacksmith, who had formerly practised, with tolerable success, as a veterinary operator in the neighbourhood of Ashestiel. 'How, in all the world !' exclaimed he, 'can it be possible that this is John Lundie ?' 'In troth is it, your Honour—just a' that's for him.' 'Well, but let us hear : you were a horse-doctor before ; now, it seems, you are a man-doctor ; how do you get on ?' 'Ou, just extraordinary weel ; for your Honour maun ken my practice is vera sure and orthodox. I depend entirely upon twa simples.' 'And what may their names be ? Perhaps it is a secret ?' 'I'll tell your Honour, in a low tone ; 'my twa simples are just *laudamy* and *calamy* !' 'Simples with a vengeance !' replied Scott. 'But John, do you never happen to *kill* any of your patients ?' 'Kill ? Ou ay, may be sae ! Whiles they die, and whiles no ; but it's the will o' Providence. *Only how, your Honour, it wad be lang before it makes up for Flodden !*'"

It was also in the course of this expedition that Scott first made acquaintance with the late excellent and venerable Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. The travellers, having reached Auckland overnight, were seeing the public rooms of the castle at an early hour next morning, when the Bishop happened, in passing through one of them, to catch a glimpse of Scott's person, and immediately recognizing him, from the likeness of the engravings by this time multiplied, introduced himself to the party, and insisted upon acting as *cicerone*. After showing them the picture-gallery and so forth, his lordship invited them to join the morning service of the chapel, and when that was over insisted on their remaining to breakfast. But Scott and his lordship were by this time so much pleased with each other that they could not part so easily. The good Bishop ordered his horse, nor did Scott observe without admiration the proud curvetting of the animal on which his lordship proposed to accompany him during the next stage of his progress. "Why, yes, Mr. Scott," said the gentle but high-spirited old man, "I still like to feel my horse under me." He was then in his seventy-ninth year, and survived to the age of ninety-two, the model in all things of a real prince of the Church. They parted, after a ride of ten miles, with mutual regret ; and on all subsequent rides in that direction, Bishop Auckland was one of the poet's regular halting-places.

At Rokeby, on this occasion, Scott remained about a week ; and I transcribe the following brief account of his proceedings while there from Mr. Morritt's *Memorandum* :—"I had, of course," he says, "had many previous opportunities of testing the almost conscientious fidelity of his local descriptions ; but I could not help being singularly struck with the lights which this visit threw on that characteristic of his compositions. The morning after he arrived he said, 'You have often given me materials for romance—now I want a good robber's cave and an old church of the right sort.' We rode out, and he found what he wanted in the ancient slate quarries of Brignal and the ruined Abbey of Eggle-

stone. I observed him noting down even the peculiar little wild flowers and herbs that accidentally grew round and on the side of a bold crag near his intended cave of Guy Denzil, and could not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining. I laughed, in short, at his scrupulousness. But I understood him when he replied, 'that in nature herself no two scenes are exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded; whereas, whoever trusted to imagination, would soon find his own mind circumscribed, and contracted to a few favourite images, and the repetition of these would sooner or later produce that very monotony and barrenness which had always haunted descriptive poetry in the hands of any but the patient worshippers of truth. Besides which,' he said, 'local names and peculiarities make a fictitious story look so much better in the face.' In fact, from his boyish habits, he was but half satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend, and when I was forced sometimes to confess, with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir,' he would laugh, and say, 'Then let us make one—nothing so easy as to make a tradition.' Mr. Morritt adds, that he had brought with him about half the *Bridal of Triermain*, told him that he meant to bring it out the same week with *Rokeby*, and promised himself particular satisfaction in *laying a trap for Jeffrey*; who, however, as we shall see, escaped the snare.

We are now close upon the end of this busy twelvemonth; but I must not turn the leaf to 1813 without noticing one of its miscellaneous incidents—his first intercourse by letter with the poet Crabbe. Mr. Hatchard, the publisher of his *Tales*, forwarded a copy of the book to Scott as soon as it was ready; and, the bookseller having communicated to his author some flattering expressions in Scott's letter of acknowledgment, Mr. Crabbe addressed him as follows:—

*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"SIR,—

"Merston, Grantham, 18th October, 1812.

"Mr. Hatchard, judging rightly of the satisfaction it would afford me, has been so obliging as to communicate your two letters, in one of which you desire my *Tales* to be sent; in the other you acknowledge the receipt of them; and in both you mention my verses in such terms, that it would be affected in me where I to deny, and I think unjust if I were to conceal, the pleasure you give me. I am indeed highly gratified.

"I have long entertained a hearty wish to be made known to a poet whose works are so greatly and so universally admired; and I continued to hope that I might at some time find a common friend, by whose intervention I might obtain that honour; but I am confined by duties near my home, and by sickness in it. It may be long before I be in town, and then no such opportunity might offer. Excuse me, then, sir, if I gladly seize this which now occurs to express my thanks for the politeness of your expressions, as well as my desire of being known to a gentleman who has delighted and affected me, and moved all the passions and feel-

ings in turn, I believe—Envy surely excepted—~~for~~certainly, if I know myself, but in a moderate degree. I truly rejoice in your success; and while I am entertaining, in my way, a certain set of readers, for the most part, probably, of peculiar turn and habit, I can with pleasure see the effect you produce on all. Mr. Hatchard tells me that he hopes or expects that thousands will read my *Tales*, and I am convinced that your publisher might, in like manner, so speak of your ten thousands; but this, though it calls to mind the passage, is no true comparison with the related prowess of David and Saul, because I have no evil spirit to arise and trouble me on the occasion; though, if I had, I know no David whose skill is so likely to allay it. Once more, sir, accept my best thanks, with my best wishes for your health and happiness, who am, with great esteem and true respect, dear sir, your obedient servant,

“GEORGE CRABBE.”

It will always be considered as one of the most pleasing peculiarities in Scott's history that he was the friend of every great contemporary poet. Crabbe was no exception to the rule; yet I could hardly name one of them who, manly principles and the cultivation of literature apart, had many points of resemblance to him, and surely not one who had fewer than Crabbe.

Scott continued, this year, his care for the *Edinburgh Annual Register*—the historical department of which was again supplied by Mr. Southey. The poetical miscellany owed its opening piece, the ballad of Polydore, to the readiness with which Scott entered into correspondence with its author, who sent it to him anonymously, with a letter which, like the verses, might well have excited much interest in his mind, even had it not concluded with stating the writer's age to be *fifteen*. Scott invited the youth to visit him in the country, was greatly pleased with the modesty of his manners and the originality of his conversation, and wrote to Joanna Baillie, that, “though not one of the crimps for the Muses,” he thought he could hardly be mistaken in believing that in the boyish author of Polydore he had discovered a true genius. When I mention the name of my friend William Howison of Clydegrove, it will be allowed that he prognosticated wisely. He continued to correspond with this young gentleman and his father, and gave both much advice, for which both were most grateful. There was inserted in the same volume a set of beautiful stanzas, inscribed to Scott by Mr. Wilson, under the title of the *Magic Mirror*, in which that enthusiastic young poet also bears a lofty and lasting testimony to the gentle kindness with which his earlier efforts had been encouraged by him whom he designates, for the first time, by what afterwards became one of his standing titles, that of “The Great Magician.”

Scott's own chief contribution to this volume was a brief account of the *Life and Poems*, hitherto unpublished, of Patrick Carey, whom he pronounces to have been not only as stout a cavalier, but almost as good a poet as his contemporary Lovelace. That essay was expanded, and prefixed to an edition of Carey's *Trivial Poems and Triolets*, which Scott published in 1820.

The year 1812 had the usual share of minor literary labours, such as

contributions to the journals, and before it closed the romance of Rokeby was finished. Though it had been long in hand, the MS. sent to the printer bears abundant evidence of its being the *prima cura*; three cantos at least reached Ballantyne through the Melrose post, written on paper of various sorts and sizes, full of blots and interlineations, the closing couplets of a despatch now and then encircling the page, and mutilated by the breaking of the seal.

According to the recollection of Mr. Cadell, though James Ballantyne read the poem as the sheets were advancing through the press to his usual circle of literary *dilettanti*, their whispers were far from exciting in Edinburgh such an intensity of expectation as had been witnessed in the case of the *Lady of the Lake*. He adds, however, that it was looked for with undiminished anxiety in the south. "Send me Rokeby," Byron writes to Murray on seeing it advertised. "Who the devil is he? No matter, he has good connexions, and will be well introduced."\* Such, I suppose, was the general feeling in London. I well remember, being in those days a young student at Oxford, how the booksellers' shops there were beleaguered for the earliest copies, and how he that had been so fortunate as to secure one was followed to his chambers by a tribe of friends, all as eager to hear it read as ever horse-jockeys were to see the conclusion of a match at Newmarket; and indeed not a few of those enthusiastic academics had bets depending on the issue of the struggle, which they considered the elder favourite as making, to keep his own ground against the fiery rivalry of Childe Harold.

The poem was published a day or two before Scott returned to Edinburgh from Abbotsford, between which place and Mertoun he had divided his Christmas vacation.

The following letter lets us completely behind the scenes at the publication of Rokeby:—

*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"DEAR MORRITT,—

"Edinburgh, 12th January, 1813.

"The publication of Rokeby was delayed till Monday, to give the London publishers a fair start. My copies, that is, my friends', were all to be got off about Friday or Saturday; but yours may have been a little later, as it was to be what they call a picked one. I will call at Ballantyne's as I return from this place, and close the letter with such news as I can get about it there. The book has gone off here very bobbishly; for the impression of 3,000 and upwards is within two or three score of being exhausted, and the demand for these continuing faster than they can be boarded. I am heartily glad of this, for now I have nothing to fear but a bankruptcy in the Gazette of Parnassus; but the loss of five or six thousand pounds to my good friends and school companions would have afflicted me very much. I wish we could whistle you here to-day. Ballantyne always gives a christening dinner, at which the Duke of Buccleuch, and a great many of my friends, are formally feasted. He has always the best singing that can be heard in Edinburgh, and we have usually a very pleasant party, at which your health as patron and proprietor of Rokeby will be faithfully and honourably remembered.

\* Byron's Life and Works, vol. ii. p. 169.

"Love to Mrs. Morritt. John Ballantyne says he has just about eighty copies left, out of 3,250, this being the second day of publication, and the book a two guinea one."

It will surprise no one to hear that Mr. Morritt assured his friend he considered Rokeby as the best of all his poems. The admirable, perhaps the unique fidelity of the local descriptions, might alone have swayed, for I will not say it perverted, the judgment of the lord of that beautiful and thenceforth classical domain; and, indeed, I must admit that I never understood or appreciated half the charm of this poem until I had become familiar with its scenery. But Scott himself had not designed to rest his strength on these descriptions. He said to James Ballantyne while the work was in progress (September 2), "I hope the thing will do, chiefly because the world will not expect from me a poem of which the interest turns upon *character*;" and in another letter (October 28, 1812), "I think you will see the same sort of difference taken in all my former poems,—of which I would say, if it is fair for me to say anything, that the force in the *Lay* is thrown on style—in *Marmion*, on description—and in the *Lady of the Lake*, on incident." I suspect some of these distinctions may have been matters of afterthought; but as to Rokeby there can be no mistake. His own original conceptions of some of its principal characters have been explained;\* and I believe no one who compares the poem with his novels will doubt that, had he undertaken their portraiture in prose, they would have come forth with effect hardly inferior to any of all the groups he ever created. As it is, I question whether even in his prose there is anything more exquisitely wrought out, as well as fancied, than the whole contrast of the two rivals for the love of the heroine in Rokeby; and that heroine herself, too, has a very particular interest attached to her. Writing to Miss Edgeworth five years after this time (March 10, 1818), he says, "I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting last year the *Lady of the Lake*, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest, so I may truly say with Macbeth—

"I am afraid to think of what I've done—  
Look on't again I dare not."

"This much of *Matilda* I recollect—(for that is not so easily forgotten)—that she was attempted for the existing person of a lady who is now no more, so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows." I can have no doubt that the lady he here alludes to was the object of his own unfortunate first love; and as little, that in the romantic generosity, both of the youthful poet who fails to win her higher favour, and of his chivalrous competitor, we have before us something more than "a mere shadow."

In spite of these graceful characters, the inimitable scenery on which they are presented, and the splendid vivacity and thrilling interest of several chapters in the story—such as the opening interview with Bertram and Wyoliff—the flight up the cliff on the Greta—the first entrance of the cave at Brignall—the firing of Rokeby Castle—and the catastrophe

\* See last edition of Rokeby.

in Eglistone Abbey ; in spite certainly of exquisitely happy lines profusely scattered throughout the whole composition, and of some detached images—that of the setting of the tropical sun, for example—which were never surpassed by any poet ; in spite of all these merits, the immediate success of Rokeby was greatly inferior to that of the *Lady of the Lake* ; nor has it ever since been so much a favourite with the public at large as any other of his poetical romances. He ascribes this failure, in his Introduction of 1830, partly to the radically unpoetical character of the Round-heads ; but surely their character has its poetical side also, had his prejudices allowed him to enter upon its study with impartial sympathy ; and I doubt not Mr. Morritt suggested the difficulty on this score, when the outline of the story was as yet undetermined, from consideration rather of the poet's peculiar feelings, and powers as hitherto exhibited, than of the subject absolutely. Partly he blames the satiety of the public ear, which had had so much of his rhythm, not only from himself, but from dozens of mocking-birds, male and female, all more or less applauded in their day, and now all equally forgotten. This circumstance, too, had probably no slender effect ; the more that, in defiance of all the hints of his friends, he now, in his narrative, repeated (with more negligence) the uniform octosyllabic couplets of the *Lady of the Lake*, instead of recurring to the more varied cadence of the *Lay* or *Marmion*. It is fair to add that, among the London circles at least, some sarcastic flings in Mr. Moore's "Twopenny Post-Bag" must have had an unfavourable influence on this occasion.\* But the cause of failure which the poet himself places last, was unquestionably the main one. The deeper and darker passion of *Childe Harold*, the audacity of its morbid voluptuousness, and the melancholy majesty of the numbers in which it defied the world, had taken the general imagination by storm ; and Rokeby, with many beauties and some sublimities, was pitched, as a whole, on a key which seemed tame in the comparison.

I have already adverted to the fact that Scott felt it a relief, not a fatigue, to compose the *Bridal of Triermain* *pari passu* with Rokeby. In answer, for example, to one of James Ballantyne's letters, urging accelerated speed with the weightier romance, he says, "I fully share in your anxiety to get forward the grand work ; but, I assure you, I feel the more confidence from coquetting with the guerilla."

The quarto of Rokeby was followed, within two months, by the small \* See, for instance, the Epistle of Lady Corke—or that of Messrs. Lackington, booksellers, to one of their dandy authors :—

"Should you feel any touch of poetical glow  
We've a scheme to suggest—Mr. Scott, you must know  
(Who, we're sorry to say it, now works for the Row),  
Having quitted the Borders to seek new renown,  
Is coming by long Quarto stages to town,  
And beginning with Rokeby (the job's sure to pay),  
Means to do all the gentlemen's seats on the way.  
Now, the scheme is, though none of our hackneys can beat him,  
To start a new poet through Highgate to meet him ;  
Who by means of quick proofs—no revises—long coaches—  
May do a few villas before Scott approaches ;  
Indeed, if our Pegasus be not curst shabby,  
He'll reach, without foundering, at least Woburn Abbey," &c., &c.

volume which had been designed for a twin birth,—the MS. had been transcribed by one of the Ballantynes themselves, in order to guard against any indiscretion of the press people; and the mystification, aided and abetted by Erskine, in no small degree heightened the interest of its reception. Except Mr. Morritt, Scott had, so far as I am aware, no English confidant upon this occasion. Whether any of his daily companions in the Parliament House were in the secret I have never heard; but I can scarcely believe that any of those intimate friends, who had known him and Erskine from their youth upwards, could have for a moment believed the latter capable either of the invention or the execution of this airy and fascinating romance in little. Mr. Jeffrey, for whom chiefly “the trap had been set,” was far too sagacious to be caught in it; but, as it happened, he made a voyage that year to America, and thus lost the opportunity of immediately expressing his opinion either of Rokeby or of the Bridal of Triermain. The writer in the *Quarterly Review* seems to have been completely deceived. “We have already spoken of it,” says the critic, “as an imitation of Mr. Scott’s style of composition, and if we are compelled to make the general approbation more precise and specific, we should say, that if it be inferior in vigour to some of his productions, it equals or surpasses them in elegance and beauty; that it is more uniformly tender, and far less infected with the unnatural prodigies and coarseness of the earlier romances. In estimating its merits, however, we should forget that it is offered as an imitation. The diction undoubtedly reminds us of a rhythm and cadence we have heard before; but the sentiments, descriptions, and characters have qualities that are native and unborrowed.”—*Quarterly Review*, July, 1813.

If this writer was, as I suppose, Ellis, he probably considered it as a thing impossible that Scott should have engaged in such a scheme without giving him a hint of it; but to have admitted into the secret any one who was likely to criticise the piece, would have been to sacrifice the very object of the device. Erskine’s own suggestion, that “perhaps a quizzical review might be got up,” led, I believe, to nothing more important than a paragraph in one of the Edinburgh newspapers. He may be pardoned for having been not a little flattered to find it generally considered as not impossible that he should have written such a poem—and I have heard Ballantyne say, that nothing could be more amusing than the style of his coquetting on the subject while it was yet fresh; but when this first excitement was over, his natural feeling of what was due to himself, as well as to his friend, dictated many a remonstrance; and, though he ultimately acquiesced in permitting another minor romance to be put forth in the same manner, he did so reluctantly, and was far from acting his part so well.

Scott says in the Introduction to the Lord of the Isles, “As Mr. Erskine was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, and as I took care, in several places, to mix something that might resemble (as far as was in my power) my friend’s feeling and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold.” Among the passages to which he here alludes, are no doubt those in which the character of the minstrel Arthur is shaded with the colourings of an almost effeminate gentleness. Yet, in the midst of them, the “mighty minstrel” himself, from time to time, escapes; as,

for instance, where the lover bids Lucy, in that exquisite picture of crossing a mountain stream, trust to his "stalwart arm"—

"Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear."

Nor can I pass the compliment to Scott's own fair patroness, where Lucy's admirer is made to confess, with some momentary lapse of gallantry, that he

"Ne'er won—best need to minstrel true—  
One favouring smile from fair Buccleuch ;"

nor the burst of genuine Borderism—

"Bewcastle now must keep the hold,  
Spear-Adam's steeds must bide in stall ;  
Of Hartley Burn the bowmen bold  
Must only shoot from battled wall ;  
And Liddesdale may buckle spur,  
And Teviot now may belt the brand,  
Taras and Ewes keep nightly stir,  
And Eskdale foray Cumberland."

But, above all, the choice of the scenery, both of the Introductions and of the story itself, reveals the early and treasured predilections of the poet. For who that remembers the circumstances of his first visit to the Vale of St. John, but must see throughout the impress of his own real romance ? I own I am not without a suspicion that, in one passage, which always seemed to me a blot upon the composition—that in which Arthur derides the military coxcombs of his rival—

"Who comes in foreign trashery  
Of tinkling chain and spur—  
A walking haberdashery  
Of feathers, lace, and fur ;—  
In Rowley's antiquated phrase,  
Horse-milliner of modern days"—

there is a sly reference to the incidents of a certain ball, of August, 1797, at the Gilsland Spa.

Among the more prominent Erskinisms are the eulogistic mention of Glasgow, the scene of Erskine's education ; and the lines on Collins,—a supplement to whose Ode on the Highland Superstitions is, as far as I know, the only specimen that ever was published of Erskine's verse.

As a whole, the *Bridal of Triermalin* appears to me as characteristic of Scott as any of his larger poems. His genius pervades and animates it beneath a thin and playful veil, which perhaps adds as much of grace as it takes away of splendour. As Wordsworth says of the eclipse on the Lake of Lugano—

"'Tis sunlight sheathed and gently charmed ;"

and I think there is at once a lightness and a polish of versification beyond what he has elsewhere attained. If it be a miniature, it is such a one as a Cooper might have hung fearlessly beside the masterpieces of Vandyke.

The Introductions contain some of the most exquisite passages he ever produced ; but their general effect has always struck me as unfortunate. No art can reconcile us to contemptuous satire of the merest frivolities

of modern life—some of them already, in twenty years, grown obsolete—interlaid between such bright visions of the old world of romance, when

“Strength was gigantic, valour high,  
And wisdom soared beyond the sky,  
And beauty had such matchless beam  
As lights not now a lover’s dream.”

The fall is grievous, from the hoary minstrel of Newark, and his feverish tears on Killiecrankie, to a pathetic swain, who can stoop to denounce as objects of his jealousy—

“The landaulet and four blood bays,  
The Hessian boot and pantaloons.”

Before Triermain came out, Scott had taken wing for Abbotsford; and indeed he seems to have so contrived it in his earlier period, that he should not be in Edinburgh when any unavowed work of his was published; whereas, from the first, in the case of books that bore his name on the title-page, he walked as usual to the Parliament House, and bore all the buzz and tattle of friends and acquaintance with an air of good-humoured equanimity, or rather total apparent indifference.

I add a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart, who had sent him a copy of these lines, found by Lady Douglas on the back of a tattered bank-note—

“Farewell, my note, and wheresoe’er ye wend,  
Shun gaudy scenes, and be the poor man’s friend.  
You’ve left a poor one, go to one as poor,  
And drive despair and hunger from his door.”

It appears that these noble friends had adopted, or feigned to adopt, the belief that the Bridal of Triermain was a production of Mr. R. P. Gillies, who had about this time published an imitation of Lord Byron’s *Romant*, under the title of “*Childe Alarique*.”

“DEAR LADY LOUISA,—

“Nothing can give me more pleasure than to hear from you, because it is both a most acceptable favour to me, and also a sign that your own spirits are recovering their tone. Ladies are, I think, very fortunate in having a resource in work at a time when the mind rejects intellectual amusement. Men have no resource but striding up and down the room, like a bird that beats itself to pieces against the bars of its cage; whereas needlework is a sort of sedative, too mechanical to worry the mind by distracting it from the points on which its musings turn, yet gradually assisting it in regaining steadiness and composure; for so curiously are our bodies and minds linked together, that the regular and constant employment of the former on any process, however dull and uniform, has the effect of tranquillizing, where it cannot disarm, the feelings of the other. I am very much pleased with the lines on the guinea-note, and if Lady Douglas does not object, I would willingly mention the circumstance in the Edinburgh Annual Register. I think it will give the author great delight to know that his lines had attracted attention, and *had* sent the paper on which they were recorded, ‘Heaven-directed, to the poor.’ Of course I would mention no names. There was, as your ladyship may remember, some years since, a most audacious and determined murder

committed on a porter belonging to the British Linen Company's Bank at Leith, who was stabbed to the heart in broad daylight, and robbed of a large sum in notes.\* If ever this crime comes to light, it will be through the circumstance of an idle young fellow having written part of a play-house song on one of the notes, which, however, has as yet never appeared in circulation.

"I am very glad you like Rokeby, which is nearly out of fashion and memory with me. It has been wonderfully popular, about ten thousand copies having walked off already in about three months, and the demand continuing faster than it can be supplied. As to my imitator, the Knight of Triermain, I will endeavour to convey to Mr. Gillies (*puisque Gillies il est*) your ladyship's very just strictures on the Introduction to the second canto; but if he takes the opinion of a hacked old author like myself, he will content himself with avoiding such *bevue*s in future, without attempting to mend those which are already made. There is an ominous old proverb which says *confess and be hanged*; and truly if an author acknowledges his own blunders, I do not know who he can expect to stand by him; whereas, let him confess nothing, and he will always find some injudicious admirers to vindicate even his faults. So that I think after publication the effect of criticism should be prospective, in which point of view I daresay Mr. G. will take your friendly hint, especially as it is confirmed by that of the best judges who have read the poem."

About a month after the publication of the *Bridal of Triermain*, the affairs of the Messrs. Ballantyne, which had never apparently been in good order since the establishment of the bookselling firm, became so embarrassed as to call for Scott's most anxious efforts to disentangle them.

Indeed, it is clear that there had existed some very serious perplexity in the course of the preceding autumn; for Scott writes to John Ballantyne, while Rokeby was in progress (August 11, 1812)—"I have a letter from James, very anxious about your health and state of spirits. If you suffer the present inconveniences to depress you too much, you are wrong; and if you conceal any part of them, are very unjust to us all. I am always ready to make any sacrifices to do justice to engagements, and would rather sell anything or everything, than be less than true men to the world."

I have already, perhaps, said enough to account for the general want of success in this publishing adventure; but Mr. James Ballantyne sums up the case so briefly in his death-bed paper, that I may here quote his words. "My brother," he says, "though an active and pushing, was not a cautious bookseller, and the large sums received never formed an addition to stock. In fact, they were all expended by the partners, who, being then young and sanguine men, not unwillingly adopted my brother's hasty results. By May, 1813, in a word, the absolute throwing away of our own most valuable publications, and the rash adoption of some injudicious speculations of Mr. Scott, had introduced such losses and embarrassments, that after a very careful consideration Mr. Scott determined to dissolve the concern." He adds, "This became a matter of less diffi-

\* This murder, perpetrated in November, 1806, remains a mystery.

culty, because time had in a great measure worn away the difference between Mr. Scott and Mr. Constable, and Mr. Hunter was now out of Constable's concern. A peace, therefore, was speedily made up, and the old habits of intercourse were restored."

How reluctantly Scott had made up his mind to open such a negotiation with Constable as involved a complete exposure of the mismanagement of John Ballantyne's business as a publisher, will appear from a letter dated about the Christmas of 1812, in which he says to James, who had proposed asking Constable to take a share both in Rokeby and in the Annual Register, "You must be aware, that in stating the objections which occur to me in taking in Constable, I think they ought to give way either to absolute necessity or to very strong grounds of advantage. But I *am* persuaded nothing ultimately good can be expected from any connection with that house, unless for those who have a mind to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. We will talk the matter coolly over, and in the meanwhile, perhaps, you could see W. Erskine, and learn what impression this odd union is like to make among your friends. Erskine is sound-headed, and quite to be trusted with *your whole story*. I must own I can hardly think the purchase of the Register is equal to the loss of credit and character which your surrender will be conceived to infer." At the time when he wrote this, Scott no doubt anticipated that Rokeby would have success not less decisive than the *Lady of the Lake*; but in this expectation—though 10,000 copies in three months would have seemed to any other author a triumphant sale—he had been disappointed. And meanwhile the difficulties of the firm, accumulating from week to week, had reached by the middle of May a point which rendered it absolutely necessary for him to conquer all his scruples.

Mr. Cadell, then Constable's partner, says in his *Memoranda*, "Prior to this time the reputation of John Ballantyne and Co. had been decidedly on the decline. It was notorious in the trade that their general speculations had been unsuccessful; they were known to be grievously in want of money. These rumours were realized to the full by an application which Messrs. B. made to Mr. Constable in May, 1813, for pecuniary aid, accompanied by an offer of some of the books they had published since 1809 as a purchase, along with various shares in Mr. Scott's own poems. Their difficulties were admitted, and the negotiation was pressed urgently; so much so that a pledge was given, that if the terms asked were acceded to, John Ballantyne and Co. would endeavour to wind up their concerns, and cease, as soon as possible, to be publishers." Mr. Cadell adds:—"I need hardly remind you that this was a period of very great general difficulty in the money market. It was the crisis of the war. The public expenditure had reached an enormous height; and even the most prosperous mercantile houses were often pinched to sustain their credit. It may easily, therefore, be supposed that the Messrs. Ballantyne had during many months besieged every banker's door in Edinburgh, and that their agents had done the like in London."

The most important of the requests which the labouring house made to Constable was, that he should forthwith take entirely to himself the stock, copyright, and future management of the Edinburgh Annual Register. Upon examining the state of this book, however, Constable

found that the loss on it had never been less than £1,000 per annum, and he therefore declined that matter for the present. He promised, however, to consider seriously the means he might have of ultimately relieving them from the pressure of the Register, and, in the meantime, offered to take 300 sets of the stock on hand. The other purchases he finally made on the 18th of May were considerable portions of Weber's unhappy Beaumont and Fletcher; of an edition of Defoe's novels, in twelve volumes; of a collection entitled Tales of the East, in three large volumes, 8vo, double columned; and of another in one volume, called Popular Tales; about 800 copies of the Vision of Don Roderick; and a fourth of the remaining copyright of Rokeby, price £700. The immediate accommodation thus received amounted to £2,000; and Scott, who had personally conducted the latter part of the negotiation, writes thus to his junior partner, who had gone a week or two earlier to London in quest of some similar assistance there:—

"DEAR JOHN,—

"After many *offs and ons*, and as many *projets* and *contre-projets* as the Treaty of Amiens, I have at length concluded a treaty with Constable, in which I am sensible he has gained a great advantage; but what could I do amidst the disorder and pressure of so many demands? The arrival of your long-dated bills decided my giving in, for what could James or I do with them? I trust this sacrifice has cleared our way, but many rubs remain; nor am I, after these hard skirmishes, so able to meet them by my proper credit. Constable, however, will be a zealous ally; and for the first time these many weeks I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow, for now I do think that, by our joint exertions, we shall get well through the storm, save Beaumont from depreciation, get a partner in our heavy concerns, reef our topsails, and move on securely under an easy sail. And if, on the one hand, I have sold my gold too cheap, I have, on the other, turned my lead to gold. Brewster and Singers are the only heavy things to which I have not given a blue eye. Had your news of Cadell's sale reached us here, I could not have harpooned my grampus so deeply as I have done, as nothing but Rokeby would have barbed the hook.

"Adieu, my dear John. I have the most sincere regard for you, and you may depend on my considering your interest with quite as much attention as my own. If I have ever expressed myself with irritation in speaking of this business, you must impute it to the sudden, extensive, and unexpected embarrassments in which I found myself involved all at once. If to your real goodness of heart and integrity, and to the quickness and acuteness of your talents, you added habits of more universal circumspection, and, above all, the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard, I pronounce that the world never held such a man of business. These it must be your study to add to your other good qualities. Meantime, as some one says to Swift, I love you with all your failings. Pray make an effort, and love me with all mine. Yours truly,

"W. S."

Three days afterwards, Scott resumes the subject as follows:—

*To Mr. John Ballantyne, London.*

"Edinburgh, 21st May, 1813.

"DEAR JOHN,—

"Let it never escape your recollection, that shutting your own eyes, or blinding those of your friends, upon the actual state of business, is the high road to ruin. Meanwhile, we have recovered our legs for a week or two. Constable will, I think, come in to the Register. He is most anxious to maintain the printing office; he sees most truly that the more we print the less we publish; and for the same reason he will, I think, help us off with our heavy quire stock.

"I was aware of the distinction between the *state* and the *calendar* as to the latter including the printing office bills, and I summed and docked them (they are marked with red ink); but there is still a difference of £2,000 and upwards on the calendar against the business. I sometimes fear that, between the long dates of your bills, and the tardy settlements of the Edinburgh trade, some difficulties will occur even in June; and July I always regard with deep anxiety. As for loss, if I get out without public exposure, I shall not greatly regard the rest. Radcliffe the physician said, when he lost £2,000 on the South Sea scheme, it was only going up 2,000 pair of stairs; I say, it is only writing 2,000 couplets, and the account is balanced. \* \* \* \* James has behaved very well during this whole transaction, and has been most steadily attentive to business. I am convinced that the more he works the better his health will be. One or other of you will need to be constantly in the printing office henceforward—it is the sheet-anchor."

The allusion to James Ballantyne's health reminds me that Scott's letters to himself are full of hints on that subject, even from a very early period of their connection, and these hints are all to the same effect. James was a man of lazy habits, and not a little addicted to the more solid, and perhaps more dangerous, part of the indulgences of the table. One letter (dated Ashestiel, 1810) will be a sufficient specimen:—

*To Mr. James Ballantyne.*

"MY DEAR JAMES,—

"I am very sorry for the state of your health, and should be still more so were I not certain that I can prescribe for you as well as any physician in Edinburgh. You have naturally an athletic constitution and a hearty stomach, and these agree very ill with a sedentary life and the habits of indolence which it brings on. Your stomach thus gets weak, and from those complaints of all others arise most certainly flatulence, hypochondria, and all the train of unpleasant feelings connected with indigestion. We all know the horrible sensation of nightmare arises from the same cause which gives those waking nightmares commonly called the blue devils. You must positively put yourself on a regimen as to eating, not for a month or two, but for a year at least, and take regular exercise, and my life for yours. I know this by myself, for if I were to eat and drink in town as I do here it would soon finish me, and yet I am sensible I live too genially in Edinburgh as it is. Yours very truly,

"W. SCOTT."

Among Scott's early pets at Abbotsford there was a huge raven whose powers of speech were remarkable—far beyond any parrot's that he had ever met with—and who died in consequence of an excess of the kind to which James Ballantyne was addicted. Thenceforth Scott often repeated to his old friend, and occasionally scribbled by way of postscript to his notes on business—

“When you are craving  
Remember the raven.”

Sometimes the formula is varied to—

“When you've dined half,  
Think of poor Ralph!”

His preachments of regularity in book-keeping to John, and of abstinence from good cheer to James Ballantyne, were equally vain; but on the other hand it must be allowed that they had some reason for displeasure (the more felt because they durst not, like him, express their feelings) when they found that scarcely had these “hard skirmishes” terminated in the bargain of May 18th, before Scott was preparing fresh embarrassments for himself by commencing a negotiation for a considerable addition to his property at Abbotsford. As early as the 20th of June he writes to Constable as being already aware of this matter, and alleges his anxiety “to close at once with a very capricious person,” as the only reason that could have induced him to make up his mind to sell the whole copyright of an as yet unwritten poem, to be entitled the *Nameless Glen*. This copyright he then offered to dispose of to Constable for £5,000, adding, “This is considerably less in proportion than I have already made on the share of *Rokeby* sold to yourself, and surely that is no unfair admeasurement.” A long correspondence ensued, in the course of which Scott mentions the *Lord of the Isles*, as a title which had suggested itself to him in place of the *Nameless Glen*; but as the negotiation did not succeed, I may pass its details. The new property which Scott was so eager to acquire was that hilly tract stretching from the old Roman road near *Turn*-again towards the *Cauldshiels Loch*, a then desolate and naked mountain mere, which he likens, in a letter of this summer (to *Lady Louisa Stuart*), to the *Lake of the Genie* and the *Fisherman* in the *Arabian tale*. To obtain this lake at one extremity of his estate, as a contrast to the *Tweed* at the other, was a prospect for which hardly any sacrifice would have appeared too much; and he contrived to gratify his wishes in the course of that July to which he had spoken of himself in May as looking forward “with the deepest anxiety.”

Nor was he, I must add, more able to control some of his minor tastes. I find him writing to *Mr. Terry*, on the 20th of June, “about ‘that splendid lot of ancient armour advertised by *Winstanley*,’ a celebrated auctioneer in London, of which he had the strongest fancy to make his spoil, though he was at a loss to know where it should be placed when it reached Abbotsford; and on the 2nd of July, this acquisition also having been settled, he says to the same correspondent: “I have written to *Mr. Winstanley*. My bargain with Constable was otherwise arranged, but *Little John* is to find the needful article, and I shall take care of *Mr. Winstanley's* interest, who has behaved too handsomely in this matter.”

to be trusted to the mercy of our little friend the Picaroon, who is, notwithstanding his many excellent qualities, a little on the score of old Gobbo—doth somewhat smack—somewhat grow to.”

Notwithstanding all this, it must have been with a most uneasy mind that he left Edinburgh to establish himself at Abbotsford that July. The assistance of Constable had not been granted, indeed it had not been asked, to an extent at all adequate for the difficulties of the case; and I have now to transcribe, with pain and reluctance, some extracts from Scott's letters, during the ensuing autumn, which speak the language of anxious and indeed humiliating distress, and give a most lively notion of the incurable recklessness of his younger partner.

“Abbotsford, Saturday, 24th July.

“DEAR JOHN,—

“I sent you the order, and have only to hope it arrived safe and in good time. I waked the boy at three o'clock myself, having slept little, less on account of the money than of the time. Surely you should have written, three or four days before, the probable amount of the deficit, and, as on former occasions, I would have furnished you with means of meeting it. These expresses, besides every other inconvenience, excite surprise in my family and in the neighbourhood. I know no justifiable occasion for them but the unexpected return of a bill. I do not consider you as answerable for the success of plans, but I do and must hold you responsible for giving me, in distinct and plain terms, your opinion as to any difficulties which may occur, and that in such time that I may make arrangements to obviate them if possible.

“Of course if anything has gone wrong you will come out here to-morrow. But if, as I hope and trust, the cash arrived safe, you will write to me, under cover to the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle, Dumfriesshire. I shall set out for that place on Monday morning early.

“W. S.”

“DEAR JAMES,—

“I address the following jobation for John to you, that you may see whether I do not well to be angry, and enforce upon him the necessity of constantly writing his fears as well as his hopes. You should rub him often on this point, for his recollection becomes rusty the instant I leave town and am not in the way to rack him with constant questions. I hope the presses are doing well, and that you are quite stout again. Yours truly,

“W. S.”

*Enclosure.*

“MY GOOD FRIEND JOHN,—

“The post brings me no letter from you, which I am much surprised at, as you must suppose me anxious to learn that your express arrived. I think he must have reached you before post-hours, and James or you *might* have found a minute to say so in a single line. I once more request that you will be a business-like correspondent, and state your provisions for every week prospectively. I do not expect you to *warrant them*, which you rather perversely seem to insist is my wish, but I do want to be aware of their nature and extent, that I may provide against the possibility of miscarriage. The calendar, to which you refer me, tells me what sums

are due, but cannot tell your shifts to pay them, which are naturally altering with circumstances, and of which alterations I request to have due notice. You say you *could not suppose* Sir W. Forbes would have refused the long-dated bills; but that you *had* such an apprehension is clear, both because in the calendar these bills were rated two months lower, and because, three days before, you wrote me an enigmatical expression of your apprehensions, instead of saying plainly there was a chance of your wanting £350, when I would have sent you an order to be used conditionally.

"All I desire is unlimited confidence and frequent correspondence, and that you will give me weekly at least the fullest anticipation of your resources, and the probability of their being effectual. I may be disappointed in my own, of which you shall have equally timeous notice. Omit no exertions to procure the use of money, even for a month or six weeks, for time is most precious. The large balance due in January from the trade and individuals, which I cannot reckon at less than £4,000, will put us finally to rights; and it will be a shame to founder within sight of harbour. The greatest risk we run is from such ill-considered despatches as those of Friday. Suppose that I had gone to Drumlanrig—suppose the pony had set up—suppose a thousand things—and we were ruined for want of your telling your apprehensions in due time. Do not plague yourself to vindicate this sort of management; but if you have escaped the consequences (as to which you have left me uncertain), thank God, and act more cautiously another time. It was quite the same to me on what day I sent that draft; indeed it must have been so if I had the money in my cash account, and if I had not, the more time given me to provide it the better.

"Now, do not affect to suppose that my displeasure arises from your not having done your utmost to realize funds, and that utmost having failed. It is one mode, to be sure, of exculpation, to suppose one's self accused of something they are not charged with, and then to make a querulous or indignant defence, and complain of the injustice of the accuser. The head and front of your offending is precisely your not writing explicitly, and I request this may not happen again. It is your fault, and I believe arises either from an ill-judged idea of smoothing matters to me—as if I were not behind the curtain—or a general reluctance to allow that any danger is near, until it is almost unparriable. I shall be very sorry if anything I have said gives you pain; but the matter is too serious for all of us to be passed over without giving you my explicit sentiments. To-morrow I set out for Drumlanrig, and shall not hear from you till Tuesday or Wednesday. Make yourself master of the post-town—Thornhill, probably, or Sanquhar. As Sir W. F. & Co. have cash to meet my order, nothing, I think, can have gone wrong, unless the boy perished by the way. Therefore, in faith and hope, and—that I may lack none of the Christian virtues—in charity with your dilatory worship, I remain very truly yours, "W. S."

Scott proceeded, accordingly, to join a gay and festive circle, whom the Duke of Buccleuch had assembled about him on first taking possession of the magnificent Castle of Drumlanrig, in Nithsdale, the principal mee-

suage of the dukedom of Queensberry, which had recently lapsed into his family. But, *post equitem sedet atra cura*—another of John Ballantyne's unwelcome missives, rendered necessary by a neglect of precisely the same kind as before, reached him in the midst of this scene of rejoicing. On the 31st he again writes :—

“Drumlanrig, Friday.

“DEAR JOHN,—

“I enclose the order. Unfortunately, the Drumlanrig post only goes thrice a week ; but the Marquis of Queensberry, who carries this to Dumfries, has promised that the guard of the mail-coach shall deliver it by five to-morrow. I was less anxious, as your note said you could clear this month. It is a cruel thing that no state you furnish excludes the arising of such unexpected claims as this for the taxes on the printing office. What unhappy management to suffer them to run ahead in such a manner !—but it is in vain to complain. Were it not for your strange concealments, I should anticipate no difficulty in winding up these matters. But who can reckon upon a state where claims are kept out of view until they are in the hands of a *writer* ? If you have no time to say that *this* comes safe to hand, I suppose James may favour me so far. Yours truly,

“W. S.

“Let the guard be rewarded. Let me know exactly what you *can* do and *hope* to do for next month ; for it signifies nothing raising money for you, unless I see it is to be of real service. Observe, I make you responsible for nothing but a fair statement. The guard is known to the Marquis, who has good-naturedly promised to give him this letter with his own hand ; so it must reach you in time, though probably past five on Saturday.”

Another similar application reached Scott the day after the guard delivered his packet. He writes thus in reply :—

“DEAR JOHN,—

“I trust you got my letter yesterday by five, with the draft enclosed. I return your draft accepted. On Wednesday I think of leaving this place, where, but for these d——d affairs, I should have been very happy. “W. S.”

Scott had been for some time under an engagement to meet the Marquis of Abercorn at Carlisle, in the first week of August, for the transaction of some business connected with his brother Thomas's late administration of that nobleman's Scottish affairs, and he had designed to pass from Drumlanrig to Carlisle for this purpose, without going back to Abbotsford. In consequence of these repeated harassments, however, he so far altered his plans as to cut short his stay at Drumlanrig, and turn homewards for two or three days, where James Ballantyne met him with such a statement as in some measure relieved his mind.

He then proceeded to fulfil his engagement with Lord Abercorn, whom he encountered travelling in a very peculiar style between Carlisle and Longtown. The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages, all drawn by the Marquis's own horses, while the noble lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on a small pony, but decorated over his riding dress with the ribbon and star of the Garter. On

meeting the cavalcade Scott turned with them, and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour or two before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there at an early hour in the morning, and everything was now arranged for his reception in the paltry little public house, as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansions. The ducks and geese that had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village pond were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises as *entrées*; a regular bill-of-fare flanked the noble Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin; and, that nothing might be wanting to the mimicry of splendour, the landlady's poor remnants of crockery and pewter had been furbished up, and mustered in solemn order on a crazy old *beaufet*, which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Sardanapalus. I think it worth while to preserve this anecdote, which Scott delighted in telling, as perhaps the last relic of a style of manners now passed away, and never likely to be revived among us.

Having dispatched this dinner and his business, Scott again turned southwards, intending to spend a few days with Mr. Morritt at Rokeby; but on reaching Penrith, the landlord there, who was his old acquaintance (Mr. Buchanan), placed a letter in his hands: *ecce iterum*—it was once more a cry of distress from John Ballantyne. He thus answered it:—

*To Mr. John Ballantyne.*

"Penrith, Aug. 10, 1813.

"DEAR JOHN,—

"I enclose you an order for £350. I shall remain at Rokeby until Saturday or Sunday, and be at Abbotsford on Wednesday at latest.

"I hope the printing office is going on well. I fear, from the state of accounts between the companies, restrictions on the management and expense will be unavoidable, which may trench upon James's comforts. I cannot observe hitherto that the printing office is paying off, but rather adding to its embarrassments; and it cannot be thought that I have either means or inclination to support a losing concern at the rate of £200 a month. If James could find a monied partner, an active man who understood the commercial part of the business, and would superintend the conduct of the cash, it might be the best for all parties; for I really am not adequate to the fatigue of mind which these affairs occasion me, though I must do the best to struggle through them. Believe me yours, &c.,

"W. S."

At Brough he encountered a messenger who brought him such a painful account of Mrs. Morritt's health, that he abandoned his intention of proceeding to Rokeby; and, indeed, it was much better that he should be at Abbotsford again as soon as possible, for his correspondence shows a continued succession, during the three or four ensuing weeks, of the same annoyances that had pursued him to Drumlanrig and to Penrith. By his desire, the Ballantynes had, it would seem, before the middle of August, laid a statement of their affairs before Constable. Though the statement was not so clear and full as Scott had wished it to be, Con-

stable, on considering it, at once assured them, that to go on raising money in dribblets would never effectually relieve them; that, in short, one or both of the companies must stop, unless Mr. Scott could find means to lay his hand, without further delay, on at least £4,000; and I gather that, by way of inducing Constable himself to come forward with part at least of this supply, John Ballantyne again announced his intention of forthwith abandoning the bookselling business altogether, and making an effort to establish himself—on a plan which Constable had shortly before suggested—as an auctioneer in Edinburgh. The following letters need no comment:—

*To Mr John Ballantyne.*

“Abbotsford, Aug. 16, 1813.

“DEAR JOHN,—

“I am quite satisfied it is impossible for J. B. and Co. to continue business longer than is absolutely necessary for the sale of stock and extrication of their affairs. The fatal injury which their credit has sustained, as well as your adopting a profession in which I sincerely hope you will be more fortunate, renders the closing of the bookselling business inevitable. With regard to the printing, it is my intention to retire from that also, so soon as I can possibly do so with safety to myself, and with the regard I shall always entertain for James's interest. Whatever loss I may sustain will be preferable to the life I have lately led, when I seem surrounded by a sort of magic circle, which neither permits me to remain at home in peace, nor to stir abroad with pleasure. Your first exertion as an auctioneer may probably be on ‘that distinguished, select, and inimitable collection of books, made by an amateur of this city retiring from business.’ I do not feel either health or confidence in my own powers sufficient to authorize me to take a long price for a new poem, until these affairs shall have been in some measure digested. This idea has been long running in my head, but the late fatalities which have attended this business have quite decided my resolution. I will write to James to-morrow, being at present annoyed with a severe headache. Yours truly,

“W. SCOTT.”

Were I to transcribe all the letters to which these troubles gave rise, I should fill a volume before I had reached the end of another twelvemonth. The next I shall quote are dated on the same day, the 24th August, which may, in consequence of the answer the second of them received, be set down as determining the *crisis* of 1813.

“Abbotsford, 24th August, 1813.

“DEAR JAMES,—

“Mr. Constable's advice is, as I have always found it, sound, sensible, and friendly—and I shall be guided by it. But I have no wealthy friend who would join in security with me to such an extent, and to apply in quarters where I might be refused would ensure disclosure. I conclude John has shown Mr. C. the state of the affairs; if not, I would wish him to do so directly. If the proposed accommodation could be granted to the firm on my personally joining in the security, the whole matter would be quite safe, for I have to receive in the course of the winter

some large sums from my father's estate.\* Besides which, I shall certainly be able to go to press in November with a new poem; or, if Mr. Constable's additional security would please the bankers better, I could ensure Mr. C. against the possibility of loss, by assigning the copyrights, together with that of the new poem, or even my library, in his relief. In fact, if he looks into the affairs, he will, I think, see that there is no prospect of any eventual loss to the creditors, though I may be a loser myself. My property here is unincumbered—so is my house in Castle Street—and I have no debts out of my own family, excepting a part of the price of Abbotsford, which I am to retain for four years. So that,

Clerkship,	£1,300	} arising out of this business; and when it is considered that my income is above £2,000 a year, even if the printing office pays nothing, I should hope no one can possibly be a loser by me. I am sure I would strip myself to my shirt rather than it should be the case; and my only reason for wishing to stop the concern was to do open justice to all persons. It must have been a bitter pill to
Sheriffdom,	300	
Mrs. Scott,	200	
Interest,	100	
Somers (say),	200	
	£2,100	

me. I can more confidently expect some aid from Mr. Constable, or from Longman's house, because they can look into the concern and satisfy themselves how little chance there is of their being losers, which others cannot do. Perhaps between them they might manage to assist us with the credit necessary, and go on in winding up the concern by occasional acceptances.

"An odd thing has happened. I have a letter, by order of the Prince Regent, offering me the laureateship in the most flattering terms. Were I my own man, as you call it, I would refuse this offer (with all gratitude); but, as I am situated, £300 or £400 a year is not to be sneezed at upon a point of poetical honour, and it makes me a better man to that extent. I have not yet written, however. I will say little about Constable's handsome behaviour, but shall not forget it. It is needless to say I shall wish him to be consulted in every step that is taken. If I should lose all I advanced to this business, I should be less vexed than I am at this moment. I am very busy with Swift at present, but shall certainly come to town if it is thought necessary; but I should first wish Mr. Constable to look into the affairs to the bottom. Since I have personally superintended them, they have been winding up very fast, and we are now almost within sight of harbour. I will also own it was partly ill humour at John's blunder last week that made me think of throwing things up."

After writing and dispatching this letter an idea occurred to Scott that there was a quarter, not hitherto alluded to in any of these anxious epistles, from which he might consider himself entitled to ask assistance, not only with little, if any, chance of a refusal, but (owing to particular circumstances) without incurring any very painful sense of obligation. On the 25th he says to John Ballantyne:—"After some

\* He probably alludes to the final settlement of accounts with the Marquis of Abercorn.

meditation last night it occurred to me I had some title to ask the Duke of Buccleuch's guarantee to a cash account for £4,000, as Constable proposes. I have written to him accordingly, and have very little doubt that he will be my surety. If this cash account be in view, Mr. Constable will certainly *assist us* until the necessary writings are made out. I beg your pardon—I daresay I am very stupid; but very often you don't consider that I can't follow details which would be quite obvious to a man of business—for instance, you tell me daily, 'that *if* the sums I count upon *are* forthcoming, the results must be as I suppose.' But in a week the scene is changed, and all I can do, and more, is inadequate to bring about these results. I protest I don't know if at this moment £4,000 *will* clear us out. After all, you are vexed, and so am I; and it is needless to wrangle who has a right to be angry. Commend me to James. Yours truly,

"W. S."

Having explained to the Duke of Buccleuch the position in which he stood—obliged either to procure some guarantee which would enable him to raise £4,000, or to sell abruptly all his remaining interest in the copyright of his works; and repeated the statement of his personal property and income, as given in the preceding letter to James Ballantyne—Scott says to his noble friend:—"I am not asking nor desiring any loan from your Grace, but merely the honour of your sanction to my credit as a good man for £4,000; and the motive of your Grace's interference would be sufficiently obvious to the London Shylocks, as your constant kindness and protection is no secret to the world. Will your Grace consider whether you can do what I propose, in conscience and safety, and favour me with your answer?—I have a very flattering offer from the Prince Regent, of his own free motion, to make me poet-laureate; I am very much embarrassed by it. I am, on the one hand, afraid of giving offence where no one would willingly offend, and perhaps losing an opportunity of smoothing the way to my youngsters through life; on the other hand, the office is a ridiculous one, somehow or other—they and I should be well quizzed,—yet that I should not mind. My real feeling of reluctance lies deeper: it is, that favoured as I have been by the public, I should be considered, with some justice, I fear, as engrossing a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses. I shall be most anxious to have your Grace's advice on this subject. There seems something churlish, and perhaps conceited, in repelling a favour so handsomely offered on the part of the Sovereign's representative; and on the other hand, I feel much disposed to shake myself free from it. I should make but a bad courtier, and an ode-maker is described by Pope as a poet out of his way or out of his senses. I will find some excuse for protracting my reply till I can have the advantage of your Grace's opinion; and remain, in the meantime, very truly, your obliged and grateful,

"WALTER SCOTT."

"P.S.—I trust your Grace will not suppose me capable of making such a request as the enclosed, upon any idle or unnecessary speculation; but, as I stand situated, it is a matter of deep interest to me to prevent these copyrights from being disposed of either hastily or at under prices. I could have half the booksellers in London for my sureties, on a hint of

a new poem; but bankers do not like people in trade, and my brains are not ready to spin another web. So your Grace must take me under your princely care, as in the days of lang syne; and I think I can say, upon the sincerity of an honest man, there is not the most distant chance of your having any trouble or expense through my means."

The Duke's answer was in all respects such as might have been looked for from the generous kindness and manly sense of his character.

*To Walter Scott, Esq., Abbotsford.*

"Drumlanrig Castle, August 28th, 1813.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I received yesterday your letter of the 24th. I shall with pleasure comply with your request of guaranteeing the £4,000. You must, however, furnish me with the form of a letter to this effect, as I am completely ignorant of transactions of this nature.

"I am never willing to *offer* advice, but when my opinion is asked by a friend I am ready to give it. As to the offer of his Royal Highness to appoint you laureate, I shall frankly say that I should be mortified to see you hold a situation which, by the general concurrence of the world, is stamped ridiculous. There is no good reason why this should be so; but so it is. *Walter Scott, Poet-Laureate*, ceases to be the Walter Scott of the *Lay, Marmion, &c.* Any future poem of yours would not come forward with the same probability of a successful reception. The poet-laureate would stick to you and your productions like a piece of *court plaster*. Your Muse has hitherto been independent—don't put her into harness. We know how lightly she trots along when left to her natural paces, but do not try driving. I would write frankly and openly to his Royal Highness, but with respectful gratitude, for he *has* paid you a compliment. I would not fear to state that you had hitherto written when in poetic mood, but feared to trammel yourself with a fixed periodical exertion; and I cannot but conceive that his Royal Highness, who has much taste, will at once see the many objections which you must have to his proposal, but which you cannot write. Only think of being haunted and recitativised by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages, maids of honour, and gentlemen pensioners! Oh, horrible, thrice horrible! Yours sincerely,  
"BUCCLEUCH, &c."

The letter which first announced the Prince Regent's proposal was from his Royal Highness's librarian, Dr. James Stanier Clarke; but before Scott answered it he had received a more formal notification from the late Marquis of Hertford, then Lord Chamberlain,

*To the Duke of Buccleuch.*

"Abbotsford, Sept. 5, 1813.

"MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—

"Good advice is easily followed when it jumps with our own sentiments and inclinations. I no sooner found mine fortified by your Grace's opinion than I wrote to Lord Hertford, declining the laurel in the most civil way I could imagine. I also wrote to the Prince's librarian,

who had made himself active on the occasion, dilating at somewhat more length than I thought respectful to the Lord Chamberlain my reasons for declining the intended honour. My wife has made a copy of the last letter, which I enclose for your Grace's perusal—there is no occasion either to preserve or return it—but I am desirous you should know what I have put my apology upon, for I may reckon on its being misrepresented. I certainly should never have survived the recitative described by your Grace; it is a part of the etiquette I was quite unprepared for, and should have sunk under it. It is curious enough that Drumlanrig should always have been the refuge of bards who decline Court promotion. Gay, I think, refused to be a gentleman usher, or some such post; and I am determined to abide by my post of Grand Ecuyer Trenchant of the Chateau, varied for that of tale-teller of an evening.

"I will send your Grace a copy of the letter of guarantee when I receive it from London. By an arrangement with Longman and Co., the great booksellers in Paternoster Row, I am about to be enabled to place their security, as well as my own, between your Grace and the possibility of hazard. But your kind readiness to forward a transaction which is of such great importance both to my fortune and comfort, can never be forgotten—although it can scarce make me more than I have always been, my dear lord, your Grace's much obliged and truly faithful

"WALTER SCOTT."

Immediately after Mr. Croker received Scott's letter, Mr. Southey was invited to accept the vacant laurel; and, to the honour of the Prince Regent, when he signified that his acceptance must depend on the office being thenceforth so modified as to demand none of the old formal odes, leaving it to the poet-laureate to choose his own time for celebrating any great public event that might occur, his Royal Highness had the good sense and good taste at once to acquiesce in the propriety of this alteration. The office was thus relieved from the burden of ridicule which had, in spite of so many illustrious names, adhered to it; and though its emoluments did not in fact amount to more than £100 a year (instead of the £300 or £400 at which Scott rated them when he declined it), they formed no unacceptable addition to Mr. Southey's income.

To avoid returning to the affair of the laureateship, I have placed together such letters concerning it as appeared important. I regret to say that, had I adhered to the chronological order of Scott's correspondence, ten out of every twelve letters between the date of his application to the Duke of Buccleuch, and his removal to Edinburgh on the 12th of November, would have continued to tell the same story of pecuniary difficulty, urgent and almost daily applications for new advances to the Ballantynes, and endeavours, more or less successful, but in no case effectually so, to relieve the pressure on the bookselling firm by sales of its heavy stock to the great publishing houses of Edinburgh and London. Whatever success these endeavours met with, appears to have been due either directly or indirectly to Mr. Constable, who did a great deal more than prudence would have warranted, in taking on himself the results of its unhappy adventures,—and, by his sagacious advice, enabled the distressed partners to procure similar assistance at the hands of others,

who did not partake his own feelings of personal kindness and sympathy. "I regret to learn," Scott writes to him on the 16th October, "that there is great danger of your exertions in our favour, which once promised so fairly, proving finally abortive, or at least being too tardy in their operation to work out our relief. If anything more can be honourably and properly done to avoid a most unpleasant shock, I shall be most willing to do it; if not—God's will be done! There will be enough of property, including my private fortune, to pay every claim; and I have not used prosperity so ill, as greatly to fear adversity. But these things we will talk over at meeting; meanwhile believe me, with a sincere sense of your kindness and friendly views, very truly yours, W. S."—I have no wish to quote more largely from the letters which passed during this crisis between Scott and his partners. The pith and substance of his, to John Ballantyne at least, seems to be summed up in one brief *postscript*:—"For God's sake, treat me as a man, and not as a milch-cow!"

The difficulties of the Ballantynes were by this time well known throughout the commercial circles not only of Edinburgh, but of London, and a report of their actual bankruptcy, with the addition that Scott was engaged as their surety to the extent of £20,000, found its way to Mr. Morritt about the beginning of November. This dear friend wrote to him, in the utmost anxiety, and made liberal offers of assistance in case the catastrophe might still be averted; but the term of Martinmas, always a critical one in Scotland, had passed before this letter reached Edinburgh, and Scott's answer will show symptoms of a clearing horizon. I think also there is one expression in it which could hardly have failed to convey to Mr. Morritt that his friend was involved, more deeply than he had ever acknowledged, in the concerns of the Messrs Ballantyne.

*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"Edinburgh, 20th November, 1813.

"I did not answer your very kind letter, my dear Morritt, until I could put your friendly heart to rest upon the report you have heard, which I could not do entirely until this term of Martinmas was passed. I have the pleasure to say that there is no truth whatever in the Ballantynes' reported bankruptcy. They have had severe difficulties for the last four months to make their resources balance the demands upon them, and I, having the price of Rokeby and other moneys in their hands, have had considerable reason for apprehension, and no slight degree of plague and trouble. They have, however, been so well supported that I have got out of hot water upon their account. They are winding up their bookselling concern with great regularity, and are to abide hereafter by the printing office, which, with its stock, &c., will revert to them fairly.

"I have been able to redeem the offspring of my brain, and they are like to pay me like grateful children. This matter has set me a-thinking about money more seriously than ever I did in my life, and I have begun by insuring my life for £4,000, to secure some ready cash to my family should I slip girths suddenly. I think my other property, library, &c., may be worth about £12,000, and I have not much debt.

"Upon the whole, I see no prospect of any loss whatever. Although in the course of human events I may be disappointed, there certainly

can be none to vex your kind and affectionate heart on my account. I am young, with a large official income, and if I lose anything now, I have gained a great deal in my day. I cannot tell you, and will not attempt to tell you, how much I was affected by your letter—so much, indeed, that for several days I could not make my mind up to express myself on the subject. Thank God! all real danger was yesterday put over; and I will write, in two or three days, a funny letter, without any of these vile cash matters, of which it may be said there is no living with them nor without them. Ever yours, most truly,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

All these annoyances produced no change whatever in Scott's habits of literary industry. During these anxious months of September, October, and November, he kept feeding James Ballantyne's press from day to day, both with the annotated text of the closing volumes of Swift's Works, and with the MS. of his *Life of the Dean*. He had also proceeded to mature in his own mind the plan of the *Lord of the Isles*, and executed such a portion of the first canto as gave him confidence to renew his negotiation with Constable for the sale of the whole or part of his copy-right. It was, moreover, at this period, that, looking into an old cabinet in search of some fishing-tackle, his eye chanced to light once more on the Ashestiel fragment of *Waverley*. He read over those introductory chapters—thought they had been undervalued—and determined to finish the story.

All this while, too, he had been subjected to those interruptions from idle strangers, which from the first to the last imposed so heavy a tax on his celebrity; and he no doubt received such guests with all his usual urbanity of attention. Yet I was not surprised to discover, among his hasty notes to the Ballantynes, several of tenour akin to the following specimens:—

“September 2nd, 1818.

“My temper is really worn to a hair's-breadth. The intruder of yesterday hung on me till twelve to-day. When I had just taken my pen, he was relieved, like a sentry leaving guard, by two other lounging visitors; and their post has now been supplied by some people on real business.”

Again,—

“Monday Evening.

“Oh, James—oh, James—two Irish dames  
Oppress me very sore;  
I groaning send one sheet I've penned—  
For, hang them! there's no more.”

A scrap of nearly the same date to his brother Thomas may be introduced, as belonging to the same state of feeling. “Dear Tom, I observe what you say as to Mr. \* \* \* \*; and as you may often be exposed to similar requests, which it would be difficult to parry, you can sign such letters of introduction as relate to persons whom you do not delight to honour, short, *T. Scott*; by which abridgment of your name I shall understand to limit my civilities.”

It is proper to mention, that, in the very agony of these perplexities,

the unfortunate Maturin received from him a timely succour of £50, rendered doubly acceptable by the kind and judicious letter of advice in which it was enclosed ; and I have before me ample evidence that his benevolence had been extended to other struggling brothers of the trade, even when he must often have had actual difficulty to meet the immediate expenditure of his own family. All this, however, will not surprise the reader.

To add to his troubles during this autumn of 1813, a demand was made on him by the Commissioners of the Income-tax, to return in one of their schedules an account of the profits of his literary exertions during the three last years. He demurred to this, and took the opinion of high authorities in Scotland, who confirmed him in his impression that the claim was beyond the statute. The grounds of his resistance are thus briefly stated in one of his letters to his legal friend in London :—

“MY DEAR RICHARDSON,—

“I have owed you a letter this long time, but perhaps my debt might not yet be discharged, had I not a little matter of business to trouble you with. I wish you to lay before either the King’s counsel, or Sir Samuel Romilly and any other you may approve, the point whether a copyright, being sold for the term during which Queen Anne’s Act warranted the property to the author, the price is liable in payment of the property-tax. I contend it is not so liable, for the following reasons :—1st, It is a patent right, expected to produce an annual, or at least an incidental profit, during the currency of many years ; and surely it was never contended that if a man sold a theatrical patent, or a patent for machinery, property-tax should be levied in the first place on the full price as paid to the seller, and then on the profits as purchased by the buyer. I am not very expert at figures, but I think it clear that a double taxation takes place. 2nd, It should be considered that a book may be the work not of one year, but of a man’s whole life ; and as it has been found, in a late case of the Duke of Gordon, that a fall of timber was not subject to property-tax because it comprehended the produce of thirty years, it seems at least equally fair that mental exertions should not be subjected to a harder principle of measurement. 3rd, The demand is, so far as I can learn, totally new and unheard-of. 4th, Supposing that I died and left my manuscripts to be sold publicly along with the rest of my library, is there any ground for taxing what might be received for the written book, any more than any rare printed book which a speculative bookseller might purchase with a view to republication ? You will know whether any of these things ought to be suggested in the brief. David Hume, and every lawyer here whom I have spoken to, consider the demand as illegal. Believe me truly yours,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

Mr. Richardson having prepared a case, obtained upon it the opinions of Mr. Alexander (afterwards Sir William Alexander and Chief Baron of the Exchequer) and of the late Sir Samuel Romilly. These eminent lawyers agreed in the view of their Scotch brethren ; and after a tedious correspondence, the Lords of the Treasury at last decided that the Income-tax Commissioners should abandon their claim upon the produce

of literary labour. I have thought it worth while to preserve some record of this decision, and of the authorities on which it rested, in case such a demand should ever be renewed hereafter.

In the beginning of December, the Town Council of Edinburgh resolved to send a deputation to congratulate the Prince Regent on the prosperous course of public events, and they invited Scott to draw up their address, which, on its being transmitted for previous inspection to Mr. William Dundas, then Member for the city, and through him shown privately to the Regent, was acknowledged to the penman by his Royal Highness's command, as "the most elegant congratulation a sovereign ever received, or a subject offered." The Lord Provost of Edinburgh presented it accordingly at the *levée* of the 10th, and it was received most graciously. On returning to the north, the magistrates expressed their sense of Scott's services on this occasion by presenting him with the freedom of his native city, and also with a piece of plate.

At this time Scott further expressed his patriotic exultation in the rescue of Europe, by two songs for the anniversary of the death of Pitt; one of which has ever since, I believe, been chaunted at that celebration :—

"Oh, dread was the time, and more dreadful the omen,  
When the brave on Marengo lay slaughtered in vain," &c.

## CHAPTER XI.

EDITION OF SWIFT PUBLISHED—PUBLICATION OF WAVERLEY.

I HAVE to open the year 1814 with a melancholy story. Henry Weber, a poor German scholar, who, escaping to this country in 1804 from misfortunes in his own, excited Scott's compassion, and was thenceforth furnished, through his means, with literary employment of various sorts. Weber was a man of considerable learning; but Scott, as was his custom, appears to have formed an exaggerated notion of his capacity, and certainly countenanced him, to his own severe cost, in several most unfortunate undertakings. When not engaged on things of a more ambitious character, he had acted for ten years as his protector's amanuensis, and when the family were in Edinburgh, he very often dined with them. There was something very interesting in his appearance and manners; he had a fair, open countenance, in which the honesty and the enthusiasm of his nation were alike visible; his demeanour was gentle and modest; and he had not only a stock of curious antiquarian knowledge, but the reminiscences, which he detailed with amusing simplicity, of an early life chequered with many strange enough adventures. He was, in short, much a favourite with Scott and all the household, and was invited to dine with them so frequently, chiefly because his friend was aware that he had an unhappy propensity to drinking, and was anxious to keep him away from places where he might have been more likely to indulge it. This vice, however, had been growing on him; and of late Scott had found it necessary to make some rather severe remonstrances about habits which were at once injuring his health and interrupting his literary industry.

They had, however, parted kindly when Scott left Edinburgh at Christmas 1813,—and the day after his return Weber attended him as usual in his library, being employed in transcribing extracts during several hours, while his friend, seated over against him, continued working at the *Life of Swift*. The light beginning to fail, Scott threw himself back in his chair, and was about to ring for candles, when he observed the German's eyes fixed upon him with an unusual solemnity of expression. "Weber," said he, "what's the matter with you?" "Mr. Scott," said Weber, rising, "you have long insulted me, and I can bear it no longer. I have brought a pair of pistols with me, and must insist on your taking one of them instantly;" and with that he produced the weapons, which had been deposited under his chair, and laid one of them on Scott's manuscript. "You are mistaken, I think," said Scott, "in your way of setting about this affair—but no matter. It can, however,

be no part of your object to annoy Mrs. Scott and the children; therefore, if you please, we will put the pistols into the drawer till after dinner, and then arrange to go out together like gentlemen." Weber answered with equal coolness, "I believe that will be better," and laid the second pistol also on the table. Scott locked them both in his desk, and said, "I am glad you have felt the propriety of what I suggested—let me only request further that nothing may occur while we are at dinner to give my wife any suspicion of what has been passing." Weber again assented, and Scott withdrew to his dressing-room, from which he immediately dispatched a message to one of Weber's intimate companions,—and then dinner was served, and Weber joined the family circle as usual. He conducted himself with perfect composure, and everything seemed to go on in the ordinary way, until whiskey and hot water being produced, Scott, instead of inviting his guest to help himself, mixed two moderate tumblers of toddy, and handed one of them to Weber, who, upon that, started up with a furious countenance, but instantly sat down again, and when Mrs. Scott expressed her fear that he was ill, answered placidly that he was liable to spasms, but that the pain was gone. He then took the glass, eagerly gulped down its contents, and pushed it back to Scott. At this moment the friend who had been sent for made his appearance, and Weber, on seeing him enter the room, rushed past him and out of the house, without stopping to put on his hat. The friend, who pursued instantly, came up with him at the end of the street, and did all he could to soothe his agitation, but in vain. The same evening he was obliged to be put into a strait waistcoat; and though, in a few days, he exhibited such symptoms of recovery that he was allowed to go by himself to pay a visit in the north of England, he there soon relapsed, and continued ever afterwards a hopeless lunatic, being supported to the end of his life in June, 1818, at Scott's expense in an asylum at York.

On the 1st of July, 1814, Scott's *Life and edition of Swift*, in nineteen volumes 8vo, at length issued from the press. This adventure, undertaken by Constable in 1808, had been proceeded in during all the variety of their personal relations, and now came forth when author and publisher felt more warmly towards each other than perhaps they had ever before done. The impression was of 1,250 copies; and a reprint of similar extent was called for in 1824. The *Life of Swift* has subsequently been included in the author's *Miscellanies*, and has obtained a very wide circulation.

By his industrious inquiries, in which, as the preface gratefully acknowledges, he found many zealous assistants, especially among the Irish *literati*.\* Scott added to this edition many admirable pieces, both in prose and verse, which had never before been printed, and still more which had escaped notice amidst old bundles of pamphlets and broadsides. To the illustration of these and of all the better known writings of the Dean, he brought the same qualifications which had, by general consent, distinguished his Dryden, "uniting," as the *Edinburgh Review* expresses it, "to the minute knowledge and patient research of the Malones and Chalmerses, a vigour of judgment and a vivacity of style to

\* The names which he particularly mentions are those of the late Matthew Weld Hartstonge, Esq., of Dublin, Theophilus Swift, Esq., Major Tickell, Thomas Steele, Esq., Leonard Macnally, Esq., and the Rev. M. Berwick.

which they had no pretensions." His Biographical narrative, Introductory Essays, and Notes on Swift, show, indeed, an intimacy of acquaintance with the obscurest details of the political, social, and literary history of the period of Queen Anne, which it is impossible to consider without feeling a lively regret that he never accomplished a long-cherished purpose of preparing a Life and edition of Pope on a similar scale. It has been specially unfortunate for that "true deacon of the craft," as Scott often called Pope, that first Goldsmith and then Scott should have taken up, only to abandon it, the project of writing his life and editing his works.

The Edinburgh Reviewer thus characterizes Scott's Memoir of the Dean of St. Patrick's:—

"It is not everywhere extremely well written, in a literary point of view, but it is drawn up in substance with great intelligence, liberality, and good feeling. It is quite fair and moderate in politics, and perhaps rather too indulgent and tender towards individuals of all descriptions—more full, at least, of kindness and veneration for genius and social virtue, than of indignation at baseness and profligacy. Altogether, it is not much like the production of a mere man of letters, or a fastidious speculator in sentiment and morality; but exhibits throughout, and in a very pleasing form, the good sense and large toleration of a man of the world, with much of that generous allowance for the

'Fears of the brave and follies of the wise.

which genius too often requires, and should therefore always be most forward to show. It is impossible, however, to avoid noticing that Mr. Scott is by far too favourable to the personal character of his author, whom we think it would really be injurious to the cause of morality to allow to pass either as a very dignified or a very amiable person. The truth is, we think, that he was extremely ambitious, arrogant, and selfish, of a morose, vindictive, and haughty temper, and though capable of a sort of patronizing generosity towards his dependants, and of some attachment towards those who had long known and flattered him, his general demeanour, both in public and private life, appears to have been far from exemplary; destitute of temper and magnanimity, and we will add, of principle in the former, and in the latter of tenderness, fidelity, or compassion." — *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xvii. p. 9.

I have no desire to break a lance in this place in defence of the personal character of Swift. It does not appear to me that he stands at all distinguished among politicians (least of all among the politicians of his time) for laxity of principle, nor can I consent to charge his private demeanour with the absence either of tenderness, or fidelity, or compassion. But who ever dreamed—most assuredly not Scott—of holding up the Dean of St. Patrick's as on the whole an "exemplary character"? The biographer felt, whatever his critic may have thought on the subject, that a vein of morbid humour ran through Swift's whole existence, both mental and physical, from the beginning.

"He early adopted," says Scott, "the custom of observing his birthday as a term not of joy but of sorrow, and of reading, when it annually recurred, the striking passage of Scripture in which Job laments and execrates the day upon which it was said in his father's house *that a man-child was born*;" and I should have expected that any man who had considered the black close of the career thus early clouded, and read the entry of Swift's diary on the funeral of Stella, his epitaph on himself, and the testament by which he disposed of his fortune, would have been

willing, like Scott, to dwell on the splendour of his immortal genius, and the many traits of manly generosity "which he unquestionably exhibited," rather than on the faults and foibles of nameless and inscrutable disease, which tormented and embittered the far greater part of his earthly being. What the critic says of the practical and business-like style of Scott's biography appears very just—and I think the circumstance eminently characteristic—nor, on the whole, could his edition, as an edition, have been better dealt with than in the essay which I have quoted. It was, by the way, written by Mr. Jeffrey, at Constable's particular request. "It was, I think, the first time I ever asked such a thing of him," the bookseller said to me; "and I assure you the result was no encouragement to repeat such petitions." Mr. Jeffrey attacked Swift's whole character at great length and with consummate dexterity; and, in Constable's opinion, his article threw such a cloud on the Dean, as materially checked, for a time, the popularity of his writings. Admirable as the paper is in point of ability, I think Mr. Constable may have considerably exaggerated its effects; but in those days it must have been difficult for him to form an impartial opinion upon such a question; for, as Johnson said of Cave, that "he could not spit over his window without thinking of *The Gentleman's Magazine*," I believe Constable allowed nothing to interrupt his paternal pride in the concerns of his review, until the *Waverley Novels* supplied him with another periodical publication still more important to his fortunes.

And this consummation was not long delayed: a considerable addition having by that time been made to the original fragment, there appeared in *The Scott's Magazine*, for February 1st, 1814, an announcement, that "*Waverley*; or, 'tis Sixty Years Since, a novel, in 3 vols. 12mo," would be published in March. And before Scott came into Edinburgh, at the close of the Christmas vacation on the 12th January, Mr. Erskine had perused the greater part of the first volume, and expressed his decided opinion that *Waverley* would prove the most popular of all his friend's writing. The MS. was forthwith copied by John Ballantyne, and sent to press. As soon as a volume was printed, Ballantyne conveyed it to Constable, who did not for a moment doubt from what pen it proceeded, but took a few days to consider of the matter, and then offered £700 for the copyright. When we recollect what the state of novel literature in those days was, and that the only exceptions to its mediocrity, the Irish tales of Miss Edgeworth, however appreciated in refined circles, had a circulation so limited that she had never realized a tithe of £700 by the best of them, it must be allowed that Constable's offer was a liberal one. Scott's answer, however, transmitted through the same channel, was, that £700 was too much in case the novel should not be successful, and too little in case it should. He added, "If our fat friend had said £1,000, I should have been staggered." John did not forget to hint this last circumstance to Constable, but the latter did not choose to act upon it; and he ultimately published the work, on the footing of an equal division of profits between himself and the author. There was a considerable pause between the finishing of the first volume and the beginning of the second. Constable had, in 1812, acquired the copyright of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and was now preparing to publish the valuable *Supplement* to that work,

which has since, with modifications, been incorporated into its text. He earnestly requested Scott to undertake a few articles for the Supplement; he agreed, and, anxious to gratify the generous bookseller, at once laid aside his tale until he had finished two essays—those on Chivalry and the Drama. They appear to have been completed in the course of April and May, and he received for each of them (as he did subsequently for that on Romance) £100.

The two next letters will give us, in more exact detail than the author's own recollection could supply in 1830, the history of the completion of Waverley. It was published on the 7th of July; and two days afterwards he thus writes.—

“Edinburgh, 9th July, 1814.

“MY DEAR MORRITT,—

“I owe you many apologies for not sooner answering your very entertaining letter upon your Parisian journey. I heartily wish I had been of your party, for you have seen what I trust will not be seen again in a hurry; since, to enjoy the delight of a restoration, there is a necessity for a previous *bouleversement* of everything that is valuable in morals and policy, which seems to have been the case in France since 1790.\* The Duke of Buccleuch told me yesterday of a very good reply of Louis to some of his attendants, who proposed shutting the doors of his apartments to keep out the throng of people. ‘Open the door,’ he said, ‘to John Bull; he has suffered a great deal in keeping the door open for me.’

“Now, to go from one important subject to another, I must account for my own laziness, which I do by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel, in three volumes, Waverley, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet; and I took the fancy of finishing it, which I did so fast, that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of this task, though I do not expect that it will be popular in the south, as much of the humour, if there be any, is local, and some of it even professional. You, however, who are an adopted Scotchman, will find some amusement in it. It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. In the first case, they will probably find it difficult to convict the guilty author, although he is far from escaping suspicion. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario*; so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town. However, the thing has succeeded very well, and is thought highly of. I don't know if it has got to London yet. I intend to maintain my *incognito*. Let me know your opinion about it. I should be most happy if I could think

\* Mr. Morritt had, in the spring of this year, been present at the first *levee* held at the Tuileries by Monsieur, afterwards Charles X.

it would amuse a painful thought at this anxious moment. I was in hopes Mrs. Morritt was getting so much better that this relapse affects me very much. Ever yours truly,  
 "W. SCOTT.

"P.S.—As your conscience has very few things to answer for, you must still burthen it with the secret of the Bridal. It is spreading very rapidly, and I have one or two fairy romances which will make a second volume, and which I would wish published, but not with my name. The truth is that this sort of muddling work amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface, who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things may please people well enough anonymously, which, if they have me in the title-page, would just give me that sort of ill name which precedes hanging, and that would be in many respects inconvenient if I thought of again trying a *grande opus*."

This statement of the foregoing letter (repeated still more precisely in a following one), as to the time occupied in the composition of the second and third volumes of *Waverley*, recalls to my memory a trifling anecdote, which, as connected with a dear friend of my youth, whom I have not seen for many years, and may very probably never see again in this world, I shall here set down, in the hope of affording him a momentary though not an unmixed pleasure, when he may chance to read this compilation on a distant shore, and also in the hope that my humble record may impart to some active mind in the rising generation a shadow of the influence which the reality certainly exerted upon his. Happening to pass through Edinburgh in June, 1814, I dined one day with the gentleman in question (now the Honourable William Menzies, one of the Supreme Judges at the Cape of Good Hope), whose residence was then in George Street, situated very near to, and at right angles with, North Castle Street. It was a party of very young persons, most of them, like Menzies and myself, destined for the bar of Scotland, all gay and thoughtless, enjoying the first flush of manhood, with little remembrance of the yesterday or care of the morrow. When my companion's worthy father and uncle, after seeing two or three bottles go round, left the juveniles to themselves, the weather being hot, we adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northwards. After carousing here for an hour or more, I observed that a shade had come over the aspect of my friend, who happened to be placed immediately opposite to myself, and said something that intimated a fear of his being unwell. "No," said he, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will." I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out this hand which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. "Since we sat down," he said, "I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied—and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night—I can't stand the sight of it when I am not at my books." "Some stupid, dogged engrossing clerk, probably," exclaimed myself, or some other giddy youth in our society. "No, boys,"

said our host, "I well know what hand it is—'t is Walter Scott's." This was the hand that, in the evenings of three summer weeks, wrote the two last volumes of Waverley. Would that all who that night watched it had profited by its example of diligence as largely as William Menzies!

In the next of these letters Scott enclosed to Mr. Morritt the prospectus of a new edition of the old poems of the Bruce and the Wallace, undertaken by the learned lexicographer, Dr. John Jamieson, and he announces his departure on a sailing excursion round the north of Scotland. It will be observed that when Scott began his letter, he had only had Mr. Morritt's opinion of the first volume of Waverley, and that before he closed it, he had received his friend's honest criticism on the work as a whole, with the expression of an earnest hope that he would drop his *incognito* on the title-page of a second edition.

"Abbotsford, July 24, 1814.

"MY DEAR MORRITT,—

"I am going to say my *vales* to you for some weeks, having accepted an invitation from a committee of Commissioners for the Northern Lights (I don't mean the Edinburgh Reviewers, but the *bond fide* commissioners for the beacons), to accompany them upon a nautical tour round Scotland, visiting all that is curious on continent and isle. The party are three gentlemen with whom I am very well acquainted, William Erskine being one. We have a stout cutter, well fitted up and manned for the service by Government, and to make assurance double sure, the admiral has sent a sloop of war to cruise in the dangerous points of our tour, and sweep the sea of the Yankee privateers, which sometimes annoy our northern latitudes. I shall visit the Clephanes in their solitude, and let you know all that I see that is rare and entertaining, which, as we are masters of our time and vessel, should add much to my stock of knowledge.

"As to Waverley, I will play Sir Fretful for once, and assure you that I left the story to flag in the first volume on purpose; the second and third have rather more bustle and interest. I wished (with what success Heaven knows) to avoid the ordinary error of novel-writers, whose first volume is usually their best. But since it has served to amuse Mrs. Morritt and you *usque ab initio*, I have no doubt you will tolerate it even unto the end. It may really boast to be a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners, and has been recognized as such in Edinburgh. The first edition of a thousand instantly disappeared, and the bookseller informs me that the second, of double the quantity, will not supply the market for long. As I shall be very anxious to know how Mrs. Morritt is, I hope to have a few lines from you on my return, which will be about the end of August or beginning of September. I should have mentioned that we have the celebrated engineer, Stevenson, along with us. I delight in these professional men of talent; they always give you some new lights by the peculiarity of their habits and studies, so different from the people who are rounded, and smoothed, and ground down for conversation, and who can say all that every other person says, and—nothing more.

"What a miserable thing it is that our royal family cannot be quiet

and decent at least, if not correct and moral in their deportment. Old Farmer George's manly simplicity, modesty of expense, and domestic virtue saved this country at its most perilous crisis; for it is inconceivable the number of persons whom these qualities, united in his behalf, who would have felt but feebly the abstract duty of supporting a crown less worthily worn.

"—I had just proceeded thus far when your kind favour of the 21st reached Abbotsford. I am heartily glad you continued to like Waverley to the end. The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility; and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him.\* I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of Borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins.

"I shall not own Waverley; my chief reason is, that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again. David Hume, nephew of the historian, says the author must be of a Jacobite family and predilections, a yeoman-cavalry man, and a Scottish lawyer, and desires me to guess in whom these happy attributes are united. I shall not plead guilty, however; and, as such seems to be the fashion of the day, I hope charitable people will believe my *affidavit* in contradiction to all other evidence. The Edinburgh faith now is, that Waverley is written by Jeffrey, having been composed to lighten the tedium of his late Transatlantic voyage. So you see the unknown infant is like to come to preferment. In truth, I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me, as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. Judges being monks, clerks are a sort of lay brethren, from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So, whatever I may do of this kind, I shall whistle it down the wind to prey on fortune. I will take care, in the next edition, to make the corrections you recommend. The second is, I believe, nearly through the press. It will hardly be printed faster than it was written; for though the first volume was begun long ago, and actually lost for a time, yet the other two were begun and finished between the 4th June and the 1st July, during all which I attended my duty in Court, and preceded without loss of time or hindrance of business.

"I wish, for poor auld Scotland's sake, and for the *manes* of Bruce and Wallace, and for the living comfort of a very worthy and ingenious dissenting clergyman, who has collected a library and medals of some value, and brought up, I believe, sixteen or seventeen children (his wife's ambition extended to twenty) upon about £150 a year,—I say I wish, for all these reasons, you could get me among your wealthy friends a name or

\* Count Borowlaski was a Polish dwarf, who, after realizing some money as an itinerant object of exhibition, settled, married, and died at Durham. He was a well-bred creature, and much noticed by the clergy and other gentry of that city. Indeed, even when travelling the country as a show, he had always maintained a sort of dignity. I remember him as going from house to house, when I was a child, in a sedan chair, with a servant in livery following him, who took the fee; M. le Comte himself, dressed in a scarlet coat and bag-wig, being ushered into the room like any ordinary visitor.

two for the enclosed proposals. The price is, I think, too high; but the booksellers fixed it two guineas above what I proposed. I trust it will be yet lowered to five guineas, which is a more comeatable sum than six. The poems themselves are great curiosities, both to the philologist and antiquary, and that of Bruce is invaluable—even to the historian. They have been hitherto wretchedly edited.

"I am glad you are not to pay for this scrawl. Ever yours,  
"WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S.—I do not see how my silence can be considered as imposing on the public. If I give my name to a book without writing it, unquestionably that would be a trick. But, unless in the case of his averring facts which he may be called upon to defend or justify, I think an author may use his own discretion in giving or withholding his name. Harry Mackenzie never put his name in a title-page till the last edition of his works; and Swift only owned one out of his thousand and one publications. In point of emolument, everybody knows that I sacrifice much money by withholding my name; and what should I gain by it, that any human being has a right to consider as an unfair advantage? In fact, only the freedom of writing trifles with less personal responsibility, and perhaps more frequently than I otherwise might do. "W. S."

I am not able to give the exact date of the following reply to one of John Ballantyne's expostulations on the subject of *the secret*.—

"No, John, I will not own the book—  
I won't, you Picaroon.  
When next I try St. Grubby's brook,  
The A. of Wa— shall bait the hook—  
And flat-fish bite as soon,  
As if before them they had got  
The worn-out wriggler,

"WALTER SCOTT."

## CHAPTER XII.

### VOYAGE TO THE SHETLAND ISLES—EXTRACTS FROM DIARY—LORD OF THE ISLES CONCLUDED.

THE gallant composure with which Scott, when he had dismissed a work from his desk, awaited the decision of the public—and the healthy elasticity of spirit with which he could meanwhile turn his whole zeal upon new or different objects—are among the features in his character which will always, I believe, strike the student of literary history as most remarkable. We have now seen him before the fate of *Waverley* had been determined—before he had heard a word about its reception in England, except from one partial confidant—preparing to start on a voyage to the northern isles, which was likely to occupy the best part of two months, and in the course of which he could hardly expect to receive any intelligence from his friends in Edinburgh. The diary which he kept during this expedition, is—thanks to the leisure of a landsman on board—a very full one, and, written without the least notion probably that it would ever be perused except in his own family circle, it affords a complete and artless portraiture of the man, as he was in himself, and as he mingled with his friends and companions, at one of the most interesting periods of his life. A few extracts from it were published by himself, in one of the *Edinburgh Annual Registers*; he also drew from it some of the notes to his *Lord of the Isles*, and the substance of several others for his romance of the *Pirate*.

I have been often told by one of the companions of this voyage that, heartily as Scott entered throughout into their social enjoyments, they all perceived him, when inspecting for the first time scenes of remarkable grandeur, to be in such an abstracted and excited mood, that they felt it would be the kindest and discreetest plan to leave him to himself. "I often," said Lord Kinnesdell, "on coming up from the cabin at night, found him pacing the deck rapidly, muttering to himself, and went to the fore-castle, lest my presence should disturb him. I remember that at Loch Corriskein, in particular, he seemed quite overwhelmed with his feelings; and we all saw it, and retiring unnoticed, left him to roam and gaze about by himself, until it was time to muster the party and be gone." Scott used to mention the surprise with which he himself witnessed Erskine's emotion on first entering the cave of Staffa. "Would you believe it?" he said, "my poor Willie sat down and wept like a woman!" Yet his own sensibilities, though betrayed in a more masculine and sterner guise, were perhaps as keen as well as deeper than his amiable friend's.

## EXTRACTS FROM DIARY.

"4th August.—Harbour of Lerwick. Admire the excellence of this harbour of the metropolis of Shetland. It is a most beautiful place, screened on all sides from the wind by hills of a gentle elevation. The town, a fishing village, built irregularly upon a hill ascending from the shore, has a picturesque appearance. On the left is Fort Charlotte, garrisoned of late by two companies of veterans. The Greenlandmen, of which nine fine vessels are lying in the harbour, add much to the liveliness of the scene. Mr. Duncan, Sheriff-Substitute, came off to pay his respects to his principal; he is married to a daughter of my early acquaintance, Walter Scott of Scots Hall. We go ashore. Lerwick, a poor-looking place, the streets flagged instead of being causewayed, for there are no wheel carriages; the streets full of drunken riotous sailors from the whale vessels. It seems these ships take about 1,000 sailors from Zetland every year, and return them as they come back from the fishery.

"The water in the harbour is very deep, as frigates of the smaller class lie almost close to the shore. Take a walk with Captain M'Diarmid, a gentlemanlike and intelligent officer of the garrison; we visit a small fresh-water loch called *Cleik-him-in*; it borders on the sea, from which it is only divided by a sort of beach, apparently artificial; though the sea lashes the outside of this beach, the water of the lake is not brackish. In this lake are the remains of a Picts' Castle, but ruinous. The people think the castle has not been built on a natural island, but on an artificial one formed by a heap of stones. These Duns, or Picts' Castles, are so small, it is impossible to conceive what effectual purpose they could serve excepting a temporary refuge for the chief.—Leave *Cleik-him-in*, and proceed along the coast. The ground is dreadfully encumbered with stones; the patches, which have been sown with oats and barley, bear very good crops, but they are mere patches, the cattle and ponies feeding among them and secured by tethers. The houses most wretched, worse than the worst herd's house I ever saw.

"6th August.—Hire a six-oared boat, whaler-built, with a taper point at each end, so that the rudder can be hooked on either at pleasure. These vessels look very frail, but are admirably adapted to the stormy seas, where they live when a ship's boat stiffly and compactly built must necessarily perish. We sailed out at the southern inlet of the harbour, rounding successively the capes of the Hammer, Kirkubus, the Ving, and others, consisting of bold cliffs, hollowed into caverns, or divided into pillars and arches of fantastic appearance, by the constant action of the waves. As we passed the most northerly of these capes, called, I think, the Ord, and turned into the open sea, the scenes became yet more tremendously sublime. Rocks upwards of three or four hundred feet in height presented themselves in gigantic succession, sinking perpendicularly into the main, which is very deep even within a few fathoms of their base. One of these capes is called the Bard-head; a huge projecting arch is named the Giant's Leg.

" 'Here the lone sea-bird wakes his wildest cry.

"Not lone, however, in one sense, for their numbers, and the variety of

their tribes, are immense, though I think they do not quite equal those of Dunbui, on the coast of Buchan. Standing across a little bay, we reached the Isle of Noss, having hitherto coasted the shore of Bressay. Here we see a detached and precipitous rock, or island, being a portion rent by a narrow sound from the rest of the cliff, and called the Holm. This detached rock is wholly inaccessible, unless by a pass of peril, entitled the Cradle of Noss, which is a sort of wooden chair, travelling from precipice to precipice on rungs, which run upon two cables stretched across over the gulf. We viewed this extraordinary contrivance from beneath, at the distance of perhaps one hundred fathoms at least. The boatmen made light of the risk of crossing it, but it must be tremendous to a brain disposed to be giddy. Seen from beneath, a man in the basket would resemble a large crow or raven floating between rock and rock. The purpose of this strange contrivance is to give the tenant the benefit of putting a few sheep upon the Holm, the top of which is level, and affords good pasture. The animals are transported in the cradle by one at a time, a shepherd holding them upon his knees. The channel between the Holm and the isle is passable by boats in calm weather, but not at the time when we saw it. Rowing on through a heavy tide, and nearer the breakers than any but Zetlanders would have ventured, we rounded another immensely high cape, called by the islanders the Noup of Noss, but by sailors Hang-Cliff, from its having a projecting appearance. This was the highest rock we had yet seen, though not quite perpendicular. Its height has never been measured: I should judge it exceeds 600 feet; it has been conjectured to measure 800 and upwards. Our steersman had often descended this precipitous rock, having only the occasional assistance of a rope, one end of which he secured from time to time round some projecting cliff. The collecting sea-fowl for their feathers was the object, and he might gain five or six dozen, worth eight or ten shillings, by such an adventure. These huge precipices abound with caverns, many of which run much farther into the rock than any one has ventured to explore. We entered (with much hazard to our boat) one called the Orkney-man's Harbour, because an Orkney vessel run in there some years since to escape a French privateer. The entrance was lofty enough to admit us without striking the mast, but a sudden turn in the direction of the cave would have consigned us to utter darkness if we had gone in farther. The dropping of the sea-fowl and cormorants into the water from the sides of the cavern, when disturbed by our approach, had something in it wild and terrible.

"After passing the Noup the precipices become lower, and sink into a rocky shore with deep indentations, called by the natives *Gios*. Here we would fain have landed to visit the Cradle from the top of the cliff, but the surf rendered it impossible. We therefore rowed on, like Thalaba, in 'Allah's name,' around the Isle of Noss, and landed upon the opposite side of the small sound which divides it from Bressay. Noss exactly resembles in shape Salisbury Craigs, supposing the sea to flow down the valley called the Hunter's Bog, and round the foot of the precipice. The eastern part of the isle is fine smooth pasture, the best I have seen in these isles, sloping upwards to the verge of the tremendous rocks which form its western front. \* \* \* \* \*

"I have gleaned something of the peculiar superstitions of the Zetlanders, which are numerous and potent. Witches, fairies, &c., are as numerous as ever they were in Teviotdale. The latter are called *Trows*, probably from the Norwegian *Dwärg* (or *dwarf*), the D being readily converted into T. The dwarfs are the prime agents in the machinery of Norwegian superstition. The *trows* do not differ from the fairies of the Lowlands, or *Sighean* of the Highlanders. They steal children, dwell within the interior of green hills, and often carry mortals into their recesses. Some, yet alive, pretend to have been carried off in this way, and obtain credit for the marvels they tell of the subterranean habitations of the trows. Sometimes, when a person becomes melancholy and low-spirited, the trows are supposed to have stolen the real being, and left a moving phantom to represent him. Sometimes they are said to steal only the heart—like Lancashire witches. There are cures in each case. The party's friends resort to a cunning man or woman, who hangs about the neck a triangular stone in the shape of a heart, or conjures back the lost individual by retiring to the hills and employing the necessary spells. A common receipt, when a child appears consumptive and puny, is, that the conjuror places a bowl of water on the patient's head, and pours melted lead into it through the wards of a key. The metal assumes of course a variety of shapes, from which he selects a portion, after due consideration, which is sewn into the shirt of the patient. Sometimes no part of the lead suits the seer's fancy. Then the operation is recommenced, until he obtains a fragment of such a configuration as suits his mystical purpose. Mr. Duncan told us he had been treated in this way when a boy.

"A worse and most horrid opinion prevails, or did prevail, among the fishers—namely, that he who saves a drowning man will receive at his hands some deep wrong or injury. Several instances were quoted to-day in company, in which the utmost violence had been found necessary to compel the fishers to violate this inhuman prejudice. It is conjectured to have arisen as an apology for rendering no assistance to the mariners as they escaped from a shipwrecked vessel, for these isles are infamous for plundering wrecks. A story is told of the crew of a stranded vessel who were warping themselves ashore by means of a hawser which they had fixed to the liffid. The islanders (of Unst, as I believe) watched their motions in silence, till an old man reminded them that if they suffered these sailors to come ashore, they would consume all their winter stock of provisions. A Zetlander cut the hawser, and the poor wretches, twenty in number, were all swept away. This is a tale of former times: the cruelty would not now be *active*; but I fear that even yet the drowning mariner would in some places receive no assistance in his exertions, and certainly he would in most be plundered to the skin upon his landing. The gentlemen do their utmost to prevent this infamous practice. It may seem strange that the natives should be so little affected by a distress to which they are themselves so constantly exposed. But habitual exposure to danger hardens the heart against its consequences, whether to ourselves or others. There is yet living a man—if he can be called so—to whom the following story belongs:—He was engaged in catching sea-fowl upon one of the cliffs, with his father and brother. All three were suspended by a cord, according to custom, and overhanging the ocean, at the height of

some hundred feet. This man being uppermost on the cord, observed that it was giving way, as unable to support their united weight. He called out to his brother who was next to him, 'Cut away a nail below, Willie,' meaning he should cut the rope beneath, and let his father drop. Willie refused, and bid him cut himself, if he pleased. He did so, and his brother and father were precipitated into the sea. He never thought of concealing or denying the adventure in all its parts.—We left Gardie House late; being on the side of the Isle of Bressay, opposite to Lerwick, we were soon rowed across the bay. A laugh with Hamilton, whose gout keeps him stationary at Lerwick, but whose good-humour defies gout and every other provocation, concludes the evening.

"16th August, 1814.—Get into Stromness Bay, and anchor before the party are up. A most decided rain all night. The bay is formed by a deep indention in the mainland, or Pomona; on one side of which stands Stromness—a fishing village and harbour of call for the Davies Straits whalers, as Lerwick is for the Greenlanders. Betwixt the vessels we met yesterday, seven or eight which passed us this morning, and several others still lying in the bay, we have seen between twenty and thirty of these large ships in this remote place. The opposite side of Stromness Bay is protected by Hoy, and Græmsay lies between them; so that the bay seems quite land-locked, and the contrast between the mountains of Hoy, the soft verdure of Græmsay, and the swelling hill of Orphir on the mainland, has a beautiful effect. The day clears up, and Mr. Rae, Lord Armadale's factor, comes off from his house, called Clestrom, upon the shore opposite to Stromness, to breakfast with us. We go ashore with him. His farm is well cultivated, and he has procured an excellent breed of horses from Lanarkshire, of which county he is a native—strong hardy Galloways, fit for labour or hacks. By this we profited, as Mr. Rae mounted us all, and we set off to visit the Standing Stones of Stenhouse or Stennis.

"At the upper end of the bay, about half-way between Clestrom and Stromness, there extends a loch of considerable size, of fresh water, but communicating with the sea by apertures left in a long bridge or causeway which divides them. After riding about two miles along this lake, we open another called the Loch of Harray, of about the same dimensions, and communicating with the lower lake, as the former does with the sea, by a stream, over which is constructed a causeway, with openings to suffer the flow and reflux of the water, as both lakes are affected by the tide. Upon the tongues of land which, approaching each other, divide the lakes of Stennis and Harray, are situated the Standing Stones. The isthmus on the eastern side exhibits a semicircle of immensely large upright pillars of unhewn stone, surrounded by a mound of earth. As the mound is discontinued, it does not seem that the circle was ever completed. The flat or open part of the semicircle looks up a plain, where, at a distance, is seen a large tumulus. The highest of these stones may be about sixteen or seventeen feet, and I think there are none so low as twelve feet. At irregular distances are pointed other unhewn pillars of the same kind. One, a little to the westward, is perforated with a round hole, perhaps to bind a victim; or rather, I conjecture, for the purpose of solemnly attesting the deity, which the Scandinavians did by

passing their head through a ring,—*vide* Eyrbiggia Saga. Several barrows are scattered around this strange monument. Upon the opposite isthmus is a complete circle, of ninety-five paces in diameter, surrounded by standing stones, less in size than the others, being only from ten or twelve to fourteen feet in height, and four in breadth. A deep trench is drawn around this circle on the outside of the pillars, and four tumuli, or mounds of earth, are regularly placed, two on each side.

"Stonehenge excels these monuments, but I fancy they are otherwise unparalleled in Britain. The idea that such circles were exclusively Druidical is now justly exploded. The Northern nations all used such erections to mark their places of meeting, whether for religious purposes or civil policy, and there is repeated mention of them in the Sagas. *See* the Eyrbiggia Saga, for the establishment of the Helga-Fels, or Holy Mount, where the people held their Comitia, and where sacrifices were offered to Thor and Woden. About the centre of the semicircle is a broad flat stone, probably once the altar on which human victims were sacrificed. Mr. Rae seems to think the common people have no tradition of the purpose of these stones, but probably he has not inquired particularly. He admits they look upon them with superstitious reverence, and it is evident that those which have fallen down (about half the original number) have been wasted by time, and not demolished. The materials of these monuments lay near, for the shores and bottom of the lake are of the same kind of rock. How they were raised, transported, and placed upright, is a puzzling question.—In our ride back, noticed a round entrenchment or tumulus, called the Hollow of Tongue.

"The hospitality of Mrs. Rae detained us to an early dinner at Clestrom. About four o'clock took our long-boat and rowed down the bay to visit the Dwarfie Stone of Hoy. We have all day been pleased with the romantic appearance of that island, for though the Hill of Hoy is not very high—perhaps about 1,200 feet—yet rising perpendicularly (almost) from the sea, and being very steep and furrowed with ravines, and catching all the mists from the western ocean, it has a noble and picturesque effect in every point of view. We land upon the island, and proceed up a long and very swampy valley broken into peat-bogs. The one side of this valley is formed by the Mountain of Hoy; the other by another steep hill, having at the top a circular belt of rock. Upon the slope of this last hill, and just where the principal mountain opens into a wide and precipitous and circular *corrie* or hollow, lies the Dwarfie Stone. It is a huge sandstone rock of one solid stone, being about seven feet high, twenty-two feet long, and seventeen feet broad. The upper end of this stone is hewn into a sort of apartment containing two beds of stone and a passage between them. The uppermost and largest is five feet eight inches long, by two feet broad, and is furnished with a stone pillow. The lower, supposed for the Dwarf's Wife, is shorter and rounded off, instead of being square at the corners. The entrance may be about three feet and a half square. Before it lies a huge stone, apparently intended to serve the purpose of a door, and shaped accordingly. In the top, over the passage which divides the beds, there is a hole to serve for a window or chimney, which was doubtless originally wrought square with irons, like the rest of the work, but has been broken out by violence

into a shapeless hole. Opposite to this stone, and proceeding from it in a line down the valley, are several small barrows, and there is a very large one on the same line at the spot where we landed. This seems to indicate that the monument is of heathen times, and probably was meant as the temple of some northern edition of the *Dii Manes*. There are no symbols of Christian devotion, and the door is to the westward; it therefore does not seem to have been the abode of a hermit, as Dr. Barry \* has conjectured. The Orcadians have no tradition on the subject excepting that they believe it to be the work of a dwarf, to whom, like their ancestors, they attribute supernatural powers and malevolent disposition. They conceive he may be seen sometimes sitting at the door of his abode, but he vanishes on a nearer approach. Whoever inhabited this den certainly enjoyed " 'Pillow cold and sheets not warm.' "

"Duff, Stevenson, and I now walk along the skirts of the Hill of Hoy, to rejoin Robert Hamilton, who in the meanwhile had rode down to the clergyman's house, the wet and boggy walk not suiting his gout. Arrive at the manse completely wet, and drink tea there. \*The clergyman (Mr. Hamilton) has procured some curious specimens of natural history for Bullock's Museum, particularly a pair of fine eaglets. He has just got another of the golden or white kind, which he intends to send him. The eagle, with every other ravenous bird, abounds among the almost inaccessible precipices of Hoy, which afford them shelter, while the moors, abounding with grouse, and the small uninhabited islands and holms, where sheep and lambs are necessarily left unwatched, as well as the all-sustaining ocean, give these birds of prey the means of support. The clergyman told us, that a man was very lately alive in the Island of \_\_\_\_\_, who, when an infant, was transported from thence by an eagle over a broad sound, or arm of the sea, to the bird's nest in Hoy. Pursuit being instantly made, and the eagle's nest being known, the infant was found there playing with the young eaglets. A more ludicrous instance of transportation he himself witnessed. Walking in the fields, he heard the squeaking of a pig for some time, without being able to discern whence it proceeded, until looking up, he beheld the unfortunate grunter in the talons of an eagle, who soared away with him towards the summit of Hoy. From this it may be conjectured that the island is very thinly inhabited. In fact, we only saw two or three little wigwams. After tea we walked a mile farther, to a point where the boat was lying, in order to secure the advantage of the flood-tide. We rowed with toil across one stream of tide, which set strongly up between Græmsay and Hoy; but, on turning the point of Græmsay, the other branch of the same flood-tide carried us with great velocity alongside our yacht, which we reached about nine o'clock. Between riding, walking, and running, we have spent a very active and entertaining day.

"*Domestic Memoranda.*—The eggs on Zetland and Orkney are very indifferent, having an earthy taste and being very small. But the hogs are an excellent breed—queer wild-looking creatures, with heads like wild boars, but making capital bacon.

\* History of the Orkney Islands, by the Rev. George Barry, D.D. 4to. Edinburgh, 1805.

"August 19, 1814.—After breakfast, took the long-boat, and under Mr. Anderson's pilotage row to see a remarkable natural curiosity, called *Uamh Smowu*, or the Largest Cave. Stevenson, Marchie, and Duff go by land. Take the fowling-piece and shoot some sea-fowl, and a large hawk of an uncommon appearance. Fire four shots, and kill three times. After rowing about three miles to the westward of the entrance from the sea to Loch Eribol, we enter a creek between two ledges of very high rocks, and landing, find ourselves in front of the wonder we came to see. The exterior apartment of the cavern opens under a tremendous rock facing the creek, and occupies the full space of the ravine where we landed. From the top of the rock to the base of the cavern, as we afterwards discovered by plumb, is eighty feet, of which the height of the arch is fifty-three feet; the rest, being twenty-seven feet, is occupied by the precipitous rock under which it opens; the width is fully in proportion to this great height, being 110 feet. The depth of this exterior cavern is 200 feet, and it is apparently supported by an intermediate column of natural rock. Being open to daylight and the sea-air, the cavern is perfectly clean and dry, and the sides are encrusted with stalactites. This immense cavern is so well proportioned that I was not aware of its extraordinary height and extent till I saw our two friends, who had somewhat preceded us, having made the journey by land, appearing like pigmies among its recesses. Afterwards, on entering the cave, I climbed up a sloping rock at its extremity, and was much struck with the prospect, looking outward from this magnificent arched cavern upon our boat and its crew, the view being otherwise bounded by the ledge of rocks which formed each side of the creek. We now propose to investigate the further wonders of the Cave of Smowe. In the right or west side of the cave opens an interior cavern of a different aspect. The height of this second passage may be about twelve or fourteen feet, and its breadth about six or eight, neatly formed into a Gothic portal by the hand of nature. The lower part of this porch is closed by a ledge of rock rising to the height of between five and six feet, and which I can compare to nothing but the hatch-door of a shop. Beneath this hatch a brook finds its way out, forms a black deep pool before the Gothic archway, and then escapes to the sea and forms the creek in which we landed. It is somewhat difficult to approach this strange pass so as to gain a view into the interior of the cavern. By clambering along a broken and dangerous cliff you can, however, look into it; but only so far as to see a twilight space filled with dark-coloured water in great agitation, and representing a subterranean lake, moved by some fearful convulsion of nature. How this pond is supplied with water you cannot see from even this point of vantage, but you are made partly sensible of the truth by a sound like the dashing of a sullen cataract within the bowels of the earth. Here the adventure has usually been abandoned, and Mr. Anderson only mentioned two travellers whose curiosity had led them farther. We were resolved, however, to see the adventures of this new Cave of Montesinos to an end. Duff had already secured the use of a fisher's boat and its hands, our own log-boat being too heavy and far too valuable to be ventured upon this Cocytus. Accordingly the skiff was dragged up the brook to the rocky ledge or hatch which barred up the interior cavern,

and there, by force of hands, our boat's crew and two or three fishers first raised the boat's bow upon the ledge of rock, then brought her to a level, being poised upon that narrow hatch, and lastly launched her down into the dark and deep subterranean lake within. The entrance was so narrow and the boat so clumsy, that we, who were all this while clinging to the rock like sea-fowl, and with scarce more secure footing, were greatly alarmed for the safety of our trusty sailors. At the instant when the boat sloped inward to the cave, a Highlander threw himself into it with great boldness and dexterity, and, at the expense of some bruises, shared its precipitate fall into the waters under the earth. This dangerous exploit was to prevent the boat drifting away from us, but a cord at its stern would have been a safer and surer expedient.

"When our *enfant perdu* had recovered breath and legs, he brought the boat back to the entrance, and took us in. We now found ourselves embarked on a deep black pond of an irregular form, the rocks rising like a dome all around us, and high over our heads. The light, a sort of dubious twilight, was derived from two chasms in the roof of the vault, for that offered by the entrance was but trifling. Down one of those rents there poured from the height of eighty feet, in a sheet of foam, the brook, which, after supplying the subterranean pond with water, finds its way out beneath the ledge of rock that blocks its entrance. The other skylight, if I may so term it, looks out at the clear blue sky. It is impossible for description to explain the impression made by so strange a place, to which we had been conveyed with so much difficulty. The cave itself, the pool, the cataract, would have been each separate objects of wonder, but all united together, and affecting at once the ear, the eye, and the imagination, their effect is indescribable. The length of this pond, or loch, as the people here call it, is seventy feet over, the breadth about thirty at the narrowest point, and it is of great depth.

"As we resolved to proceed, we directed the boat to a natural arch on the right hand or west side of the cataract. This archway was double, a high arch being placed above a very low one, as in a Roman aqueduct. The ledge of rock which forms this lower arch is not above two feet and a half high above the water, and under this we were to pass in the boat, so that we were fain to pile ourselves flat upon each other like a layer of herrings. By this judicious disposition we were pushed in safety beneath this low-browed rock into a region of utter darkness. For this, however, we were provided, for we had a tinder-box and lights. The view back upon the twilight lake we had crossed, its sullen eddies wheeling round and round, and its echoes resounding to the ceaseless thunder of the waterfall, seemed dismal enough, and was aggravated by temporary darkness, and in some degree by a sense of danger. The lights, however, dispelled the latter sensation, if it prevailed to any extent, and we now found ourselves in a narrow cavern, sloping somewhat upward from the water. We got out of the boat, proceeded along some slippery places upon shelves of the rock, and gained the dry land. I cannot say *dry*, excepting comparatively. We were then in an arched cave, twelve feet high in the roof, and about eight feet in breadth, which went winding into the bowels of the earth for about a hundred feet. The sides, being (like those of the whole cavern) of limestone rock, were covered with

stalactites and with small drops of water like dew, glancing like ten thousand thousand sets of birthday diamonds under the glare of our lights. In some places these stalactites branch out into broad and curious ramifications, resembling coral and the foliage of submarine plants.

"When we reached the extremity of this passage, we found it declined suddenly to a horrible ugly gulf, or well, filled with dark water, and of great depth, over which the rock closed. We threw in stones, which indicated great profundity by their sound; and growing more familiar with the horrors of this den, we sounded with an oar, and found about ten feet depth at the entrance, but discovered, in the same manner, that the gulf extended under the rock, deepening as it went, God knows how far. Imagination can figure few deaths more horrible than to be sucked under these rocks into some unfathomable abyss, where your corpse could never be found to give intimation of your fate. A water kelpy, or an evil spirit of any aquatic propensities, could not choose a fitter abode; and, to say the truth, I believe at our first entrance, and when all our feelings were afloat at the novelty of the scene, the unexpected plashing of a seal would have routed the whole dozen of us. The mouth of this ugly gulf was all covered with slimy alluvious substances, which led Mr. Stevenson to observe, that it could have no separate source, but must be fed from the waters of the outer lake and brook, as it lay upon the same level, and seemed to rise and fall with them, without having anything to indicate a separate current of its own. Rounding this perilous hole, or gulf, upon the aforesaid alluvious substances, which formed its shores, we reached the extremity of the cavern, which there ascends like a vent, or funnel, directly up a sloping precipice, but hideously black, and slippery from wet and sea-weeds. One of our sailors, a Zetlander, climbed up a good way, and by holding up a light, we could plainly perceive that this vent closed after ascending to a considerable height; and here, therefore, closed the adventure of the Cave of Smowe, for it appeared utterly impossible to proceed farther in any direction whatever. There is a tradition that the first Lord Reay went through various subterranean abysses, and at length returned, after ineffectually endeavouring to penetrate to the extremity of the Smowe Cave; but this must be either fabulous, or an exaggerated account of such a journey as we performed. And under the latter supposition, it is a curious instance how little the people in the neighbourhood of this curiosity have cared to examine it.

"In returning, we endeavoured to familiarize ourselves with the objects in detail, which, viewed together, had struck us with so much wonder. The stalactites, or limy incrustations, upon the walls of the cavern, are chiefly of a dark brown colour, and in this respect Smowe is inferior, according to Mr. Stevenson, to the celebrated Cave of Macallister in the Isle of Skye. In returning, the men with the lights, and the various groups and attitudes of the party, gave a good deal of amusement. We now ventured to clamber along the side of the rock above the subterranean water, and thus gained the upper arch, and had the satisfaction to see our admirable and good-humoured commodore, Hamilton, floated beneath the lower arch into the second cavern. His goodly countenance being illuminated by a single candle, his recumbent posture, and the ap-

pearance of a hard-favoured fellow guiding the boat, made him the very picture of Bibbo, in the catch, when he wakes in Charon's boat.

"Descending from our superior station on the upper arch, we now again embarked and spent some time in rowing about and examining this second cave. We could see our dusky entrance, into which daylight streamed faint, and at a considerable distance; and under the arch of the outer cavern stood a sailor, with an oar in his hand, looking, in the perspective, like a fairy with his wand. We at length emerged unwillingly from this extraordinary basin, and again enjoyed ourselves in the large exterior cave. Our boat was hoisted with some difficulty over the ledge, which appears the natural barrier of the interior apartments, and restored in safety to the fishers, who were properly gratified for the hazard which their skiff, as well as one of themselves, had endured. After this we resolved to ascend the rocks, and discover the opening by which the cascade was discharged from above into the second cave. Erskine and I by some chance took the wrong side of the rocks, and after some scrambling got into the face of a dangerous precipice, where Erskine, to my great alarm, turned giddy, and declared he could not go farther. I clambered up without much difficulty, and, shouting to the people below, got two of them to assist the counsellor, who was brought into, by the means which have sent many a good fellow out of the world—I mean a rope. We easily found the brook, and traced its descent till it precipitates itself down a chasm of the rock into the subterranean apartment where we first made its acquaintance. Divided by a natural arch of stone from the chasm down which the cascade falls, there is another rent which serves as a skylight to the cavern, as I already noticed. Standing on a natural foot-bridge, formed by the arch which divides these two gulfs, you have a grand prospect into both. The one is deep, black, and silent, only affording at the bottom a glimpse of the dark and sullen pool which occupies the interior of the cavern. The right-hand rent, down which the stream discharges itself, seems to ring and reel with the unceasing roar of the cataract, which envelopes its side in mist and foam. This part of the scene alone is worth a day's journey. After heavy rains, the torrent is discharged into this cavern with astonishing violence; and the size of the chasm being inadequate to the reception of such a volume of water, it is thrown up in spouts like the blowing of a whale. But at such times the entrance of the cavern is inaccessible."

#### THE HEBRIDES.

"1st September, 1814.—Rise betwixt six and seven, and having discreetly secured our breakfast, take boat for the old Castle of Dunstaffnage, situated upon a promontory on the side of Loch Linnhe and near to Loch Etive. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the day and of the prospect. We coasted the low, large, and fertile Isle of Lismore, where a Catholic Bishop, Chisholm, has established a seminary of young men intended for priests, and, what is a better thing, a valuable lime-work. Report speaks well of the lime, but indifferently of the progress of the students. Tackling to the shore of the loch, we land at Dunstaffnage, once, it is said, the seat of the Scottish monarchy, till success over the Picts and Saxons transferred their throne to Scoone, Dumfermline, and at length to Edin-

burgh. The castle is still the King's (nominally), and the Duke of Argyle (nominally also) is hereditary keeper. But the real right of property is in the family of the depute-keeper, to which it was assigned as an appanage, the first possessor being a natural son of the Earl of Argyle. The shell of the castle, for little more now remains, bears marks of extreme antiquity. It is square in form, with round towers at three of the angles, and is situated upon a lofty precipice, carefully scarped on all sides to render it perpendicular. The entrance is by a staircase, which conducts you to a wooden landing-place in front of the portal-door. This landing-place could formerly be raised at pleasure, being of the nature of a draw-bridge. When raised, the place was inaccessible. You pass under an ancient arch, with a low vault (being the porter's lodge) on the right hand, and flanked by loopholes, for firing upon any hostile guest who might force his passage thus far. This admits you into the inner court, which is about eighty feet square. It contains two mean-looking buildings, about sixty or seventy years old, the ancient castle having been consumed by fire 1715. It is said that the nephew of the proprietor was the incendiary. We went into the apartments, and found they did not exceed the promise of the exterior; but they admitted us to walk upon the battlements of the old castle, which displayed a most splendid prospect. Beneath, and far projected into the loch, were seen the woods and houses of Campbell of Lochnell. A little summer-house upon an eminence, belonging to this wooded bank, resembles an ancient monument. On the right, Loch Etive, after pouring its waters like a furious cataract over a strait called Connell Ferry, comes between the castle and a round island belonging to its demesne, and nearly insulates the situation. In front is a low rocky eminence on the opposite side of the arm, through which Loch Etive flows into Loch Linnhe. Here was situated *Beregenium*, once, it is said, a British capital city, and, as our informant told us, the largest market town in Scotland. Of this splendour are no remains but a few trenches and excavations, which the distance did not allow us to examine.

The ancient masonry of Dunstaffnage is mouldering fast under time and neglect. The foundations are beginning to decay, and exhibit gaps between the rock and the wall, and the battlements are become ruinous. The inner court is encumbered with ruins. A hundred pounds or two would put this very ancient fortress in a state of preservation for ages, but I fear this is not to be expected. The stumps of large trees, which had once shaded the vicinity of the castle, gave symptoms of decay in the family of Dunstaffnage. We were told of some ancient spurs and other curiosities preserved in the castle, but they were locked up. In the vicinity of the castle is a chapel which had once been elegant, but by the building up of windows, &c., is now heavy enough. I have often observed that the means adopted in Scotland for repairing old buildings are generally as destructive of their grace and beauty as if that had been the express object. Unfortunately most churches, particularly, have gone through both stages of destruction, having been first repaired by the building-up of the beautiful shafted windows, and then the roof being suffered to fall in, they became ruins indeed, but without any touch of the picturesque further than their massive walls and columns may afford. Near the chapel of Dunstaffnage is a remarkable echo.

"Reimbarked, and rowing about a mile and a half or better along the shore of the lake, again landed under the ruins of the old Castle of Dunolly. This fortress, which, like that of Dunstaffnage, forms a marked feature in this exquisite landscape, is situated on a bold and precipitous promontory overhanging the lake. The principal part of the ruins now remaining is a square tower or keep of the ordinary size, which had been the citadel of the castle; but fragments of other buildings, overgrown with ivy, show that Dunolly had once been a place of considerable importance. These had enclosed a courtyard, of which the keep probably formed one side, the entrance being by a very steep ascent from the land side, which had formerly been cut across by a deep moat, and defended doubtless by outworks and a drawbridge. Beneath the castle stands the modern house of Dunolly, a decent mansion, suited to the reduced state of the MacDougalls of Lorn, who, from being barons powerful enough to give battle to and defeat Robert Bruce, are now declined into private gentlemen of moderate fortune.

"IN THE FIRTH OF CLYDE. *8th September.*—A dead calm, but the weather very serene. With much difficulty, and by the assistance of the tide, we advanced up the Firth, and passing the village of Gairloch, at length reached Greenock. Took an early dinner, and embarked in the steamboat for Glasgow. We took leave of our little yacht under the repeated cheers of the sailors, who had been much pleased with their erratic mode of travelling about, so different from the tedium of a regular voyage. After we reached Glasgow—a journey which we performed at the rate of about eight miles an hour, and with a smoothness of motion which probably resembles flying—we supped together and prepared to separate; Erskine and I go to-morrow to the Advocate's at Killermont, and thence to Edinburgh. So closes my Journal. But I must not omit to say, that among five or six persons, some of whom were doubtless different in tastes and pursuits, there did not occur, during the close communication of more than six weeks aboard a small vessel, the slightest difference of opinion. Each seemed anxious to submit his own wishes to those of his friends. The consequence was, that by judicious arrangement all were gratified in their turn, and frequently he who made some sacrifices to the views of his companions, was rewarded by some unexpected gratification calculated particularly for his own amusement. Thus ends my little excursion, in which, bating one circumstance, which must have made me miserable for the time wherever I had learned it, I have enjoyed as much pleasure as in any six weeks of my life. We had constant exertion, a succession of wild and uncommon scenery, good humour on board, and objects of animation and interest when we went ashore—

"*Sed fugit interea—fugit irrevocabile tempus.*"

Erskine received the news of the Duchess of Buccleuch's death on the day when the party landed at Dunstaffnage; but, knowing how it would affect Scott, took means to prevent its reaching him until the expedition should be concluded. He heard the event casually mentioned by a stranger during dinner at Port Rush, and was for the moment quite overpowered.

Of the letters which Scott wrote to his friends during those happy six

weeks, I have recovered only one, and it is, thanks to the leisure of the yacht, in verse. The strong and easy heroics of the first section prove, I think, that Mr. Canning did not err when he told him that if he chose he might emulate even Dryden's command of that noble measure; and the dancing anapæsts of the second show that he could with equal facility have rivalled the gay graces of Cotton, Anstey, or Moore.\* This epistle did not reach the Duke of Buccleuch until his lovely Duchess was no more.

*Scott to his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c.*

"Glasgow, Sept. 8, 1814.

"MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—

"I take the earliest opportunity, after landing, to discharge a task so distressing to me, that I find reluctance and fear even in making the attempt, and for the first time address so kind and generous a friend without either comfort and confidence in myself, or the power of offering a single word of consolation to his affliction. I learned the late calamitous news (which indeed no preparation could have greatly mitigated) quite unexpectedly, when upon the Irish coast; nor could the shock of an earthquake have affected me in the same proportion. Since that time I have been detained at sea, thinking of nothing but what has happened, and of the painful duty I am now to perform. If the deepest interest in this inexpressible loss could qualify me for expressing myself upon a subject so distressing, I know few whose attachment and respect for the lamented object of our sorrows can or ought to exceed my own, for never was more attractive kindness and condescension displayed by one of her sphere, or returned with deeper and more heartfelt gratitude by one in my own. But selfish regret and sorrow, while they claim a painful and unavailing ascendance, cannot drown the recollection of the virtues lost to the world, just when their scene of acting had opened wider, and to her family when the prospect of their speedy entry upon life rendered her precept and example peculiarly important. And such an example! for of all whom I have ever seen, in whatever rank, she possessed most the power of rendering virtue lovely—combining purity of feeling and soundness of judgment with a sweetness and affability which won the affections of all who had the happiness of approaching her. And this is the partner of whom it has been God's pleasure to deprive your Grace, and the friend for whom I now sorrow, and shall sorrow while I can remember anything. The recollection of her excellencies can but add bitterness, at least in the first pangs of calamity, yet it is impossible to forbear the topic; it runs to my pen as to my thoughts, till I almost call in question, for an instant, the Eternal Wisdom which has so early summoned her from this wretched world, where pain and grief and sorrow are our portion, to join those to whom her virtues, while upon earth, gave her so strong a resemblance. Would to God I could say *be comforted*; but I feel every common topic of consolation must be, for the time at least, even an irritation to affliction. Grieve, then, my dear lord, or, I should say, my dear and much-honoured friend, for sorrow for the time levels the highest distinctions of rank; but do not grieve as those who have no hope. I know the last earthly thoughts of the departed sharer of your joys and sorrows must

\* This letter will be found in *Poetical Works*, "Epistle to the Duke of Buccleuch."

have been for your Grace and the dear pledges she has left to your care. Do not, for their sake, suffer grief to take that exclusive possession which disclaims care for the living, and is not only useless to the dead, but is what their wishes would have most earnestly deprecated. To time, and to God, whose are both time and eternity, belongs the office of future consolation; it is enough to require from the sufferer under such a dispensation to bear his burden of sorrow with fortitude, and to resist those feelings which prompt us to believe that that which is galling and grievous is therefore altogether beyond our strength to support. Most bitterly do I regret some levity which I fear must have reached you when your distress was most poignant, and most dearly have I paid for venturing to anticipate the time which is not ours, since I received these deplorable news at the very moment when I was collecting some trifles that I thought might give satisfaction to the person whom I so highly honoured, and who, among her numerous excellencies, never failed to seem pleased with what she knew was meant to afford her pleasure.

"But I must break off, and have perhaps already written too much. I learnt by a letter from Mrs. Scott, this day received, that your Grace is at Bowhill. In the beginning of next week I will be in the vicinity, and when your Grace can receive me without additional pain, I shall have the honour of waiting upon you. I remain, with the deepest sympathy, my Lord Duke, your Grace's truly distressed and most grateful servant,  
"WALTER SCOTT."

As Scott passed through Edinburgh on his return from his voyage, the negotiation as to the Lord of the Isles, which had been protracted through several months, was completed—Constable agreeing to give fifteen hundred guineas for one-half of the copyright, while the other moiety was retained by the author. The sum mentioned had been offered by Constable at an early stage of the affair, but it was not until now accepted, in consequence of the earnest wish of Scott and Ballantyne to saddle the publisher of the new poem with part of their old "quire stock,"—which, however, Constable ultimately persisted in refusing. It may easily be believed that John Ballantyne's management of money matters during Scott's six weeks' absence had been such as to render it doubly convenient for the poet to have this matter settled on his arrival in Edinburgh; and it may also be supposed that the progress of *Waverley* during that interval had tended to put the chief parties in good humour with each other.

In returning to *Waverley*, I must observe most distinctly that nothing can be more unfounded than the statement which has of late years been frequently repeated in memoirs of Scott's life, that the sale of the first edition of this immortal tale was slow. It appeared the 7th of July, and the whole impression (1,000 copies) had disappeared within five weeks; an occurrence then unprecedented in the case of an anonymous novel, put forth, at what is called among publishers *the dead season*. A second edition, of 2,000 copies, was at least projected by the 24th of the same month,—that appeared before the end of August, and it too had gone off so rapidly, that when Scott passed through Edinburgh, on his way from the Hebrides, he found Constable eager to treat, on the same

terms as before, for a third of 1,000 copies. This third edition was published in October, and when a fourth of the like extent was called for in November, I find Scott writing to John Ballantyne:—"I suppose Constable won't quarrel with a work on which he has netted £612 in four months, with a certainty of making it £1,000 before the year is out;" and, in fact, owing to the diminished expense of advertising, the profits of this fourth edition were to each party £440. To avoid recurring to these details, I may as well state at once that a fifth edition of 1,000 copies appeared in January, 1815; a sixth of 1,500 in June, 1816; a seventh of 2,000 in October, 1817; an eighth of 2,000 in April, 1821; that in the collective editions, prior to 1829, 11,000 were disposed of; and that the sale of the current edition, with notes, begun in 1829, has already reached 40,000 copies. Well might Constable regret that he had not ventured to offer £1,000 for the whole copyright of *Waverley*!

I must now look back for a moment to the history of the composition. The letter of September, 1810, was not the only piece of discouragement which Scott had received during the progress of *Waverley* from his first confidant. My good friend, James Ballantyne, in his death-bed *Memo-randum*, says:—"When Mr. Scott first questioned me as to my hopes of him as a novelist, it somehow or other did chance that they were not very high. He saw this, and said, 'Well, I don't see why I should not succeed as well as other people. At all events, faint heart never won fair lady—'his only trying.' When the first volume was completed, I still could not get myself to think much of the *Waverley* Honour scenes; and in this I afterwards found that I sympathized with many. But, to my utter shame be it spoken, when I reached the exquisite descriptions of scenes and manners at Tully-Weolan, what did I do but pronounce them at once to be utterly vulgar! When the success of the work so entirely knocked me down as a man of taste, all that the good-natured author said was—'Well, I really thought you were wrong about the Scotch. Why, Burns, by his poetry, had already attracted universal attention to everything Scottish, and I confess I couldn't see why I should not be able to keep the flame alive merely because I wrote Scotch in prose, and he in rhyme.'—It is, I think, very agreeable to have this manly avowal to compare with the delicate allusion which Scott makes to the affair in his preface to the novel.

The only other friends originally entrusted with his secret appear to have been Mr. Erskine and Mr. Morritt. I know not at what stage the former altered the opinion which he formed on seeing the tiny fragment of 1805. The latter did not, as we have seen, receive the book until it was completed; but he anticipated, before he closed the first volume, the station which public opinion would ultimately assign to *Waverley*. "How the story may continue," Mr. Morritt then wrote, "I am not able to divine; but, as far as I have read, pray let us thank you for the Castle of Tully-Weolan, and the delightful drinking-bout at Lucky MacLeary's, for the characters of the Laird of Balmawhapple and the Baron of Brudwardine; and no less for Davie Gellatly, whom I take to be a transcript of William Rose's motley follower, commonly yept Caliban. If the completion be equal to what we have just devoured, it deserves a place among our standard works far better than its modest appearance and

anonymous title-page will at first gain it in these days of prolific story-telling. Your manner of narrating it is so different from the slipshod sauntering verbiage of common novels, and from the stiff, precise, and prim sententiousness of some of our female moralists, that I think it can't fail to strike anybody who knows what style means ; but, amongst the gentle class, who swallow every blue-backed book in a circulating library for the sake of the story, I should fear half the knowledge of nature it contains, and all the real humour, may be thrown away. Sir Everard, Mrs. Rachael, and the Baron are, I think, in the first rank of portraits for nature and character ; and I could depone to their likeness in any court of taste. The ballad of St. Swithin, and scraps of *old songs*, were measures of danger if you meant to continue your concealment ; but, in truth, you wear your disguise something after the manner of Bottom the weaver ; and in spite of you the truth will soon peep out." And next day he resumes :—"We have finished *Waverley*, and were I to tell you all my admiration you would accuse me of complimenting. You have quite attained the point which your *postscript preface* mentions as your object—the discrimination of Scottish character, which had hitherto been slurred over with clumsy national daubing." He adds, a week or two later :—"After all, I need not much thank you for your confidence. How could you have hoped that I should not discover you ? I had heard you tell half the anecdotes before—some turns you owe to myself ; and no doubt most of your friends must have the same sort of thing to say."

Monk Lewis's letter on the subject is so short, that I must give it as it stands :—

"MY DEAR SCOTT,—

"I return some books of yours which you lent me '*sixty years since*'—and I hope they will reach you safe. I write in great haste ; and yet I must mention that hearing *Waverley* ascribed to you, I bought it, and read it with all impatience. I am now told it is not yours, but William Erskine's. If this is so, pray tell him from me that I think it excellent in every respect, and that I believe every word of it. Ever yours,

"M. G. LEWIS."

Another friend (and he had, I think, none more dear), the late Margaret Maclean Clephane of Torloisk, afterwards Marchioness of Northampton, writes thus from Kirkness, in Kinross-shire, on the 11th October :—"In this place I feel a sort of pleasure, not unallied to pain, from the many recollections that every venerable tree, and every sunny bank, and every honeysuckle, bower occasions ; and I have found something here that speaks to me in the voice of a valued friend—*Waverley*. The question that rises, it is perhaps improper to give utterance to. If so, let it pass as an exclamation. Is it possible that Mr. Erskine can have written it ? The poetry, I think, would prove a different descent in any court in Christendom. The turn of the phrases in many places is so peculiarly yours, that I fancy I hear your voice repeating them ; and there wants but verse to make all *Waverley* an enchanting poem—varying to be sure from grave to gay, but with so deepening an interest as to leave an impression on the mind that few—very few poems—could awake. But

why did not the author allow me to be his Gaelic Dragoman? Oh! Mr. , whoever you are, you might have safely trusted M.M.C."

There was one person with whom it would, of course, have been more than vain to affect any concealment. On the publication of the third edition I find him writing thus to his brother Thomas, who had by this time gone to Canada as paymaster of the 70th regiment:—"Dear Tom, a novel here, called *Waverley*, has had enormous success. I sent you a copy and will send you another, with the Lord of the Isles, which will be out at Christmas. The success which it has had, with some other circumstances, has induced people

"To lay the bantling at a certain door,  
Where, laying store of faults, they'd fann heap more.

"You will guess for yourself how far such a report has credibility; but by no means give the weight of your opinion to the Transatlantic public; for you must know there is also a counter-report that *you* have written the said *Waverley*. Send me a novel intermixing your exuberant and natural humour with any incidents and descriptions of scenery you may see—particularly with characters and traits of manners. I will give it all the cobbling that is necessary, and, if you do but exert yourself, I have not the least doubt it will be worth £500; and, to encourage you, you may, when you send the MS., draw on me for £100 at fifty days' sight—so that your labours will at any rate not be quite thrown away. You have more fun and descriptive talent than most people; and all that you want—i.e., the mere practice of composition—I can supply, or the devil's in it. Keep this matter a dead secret, and look knowing when *Waverley* is spoken of. If you are not Sir John Falstaff, you are as good a man as he, and may therefore face Colville of the Dale. You may believe I don't want to make you the author of a book you have never seen; but if people will upon their own judgment suppose so, and also on their own judgment give you £500 to try your hand on a novel, I don't see that you are a pin's point the worse. Mind that your MS. attends the draft. I am perfectly serious and confident that in two or three months you might clear the cobs. I beg my compliments to the hero who is afraid of Jeffrey's scalping-knife."

In truth no one of Scott's intimate friends ever had, or could have had, the slightest doubt as to the parentage of *Waverley*; nor, although he abstained from communicating the fact formally to most of them, did he ever affect any real concealment in the case of such persons; nor, when any circumstance arose which rendered the withholding of direct confidence on the subject incompatible with perfect freedom of feeling on both sides, did he hesitate to make the avowal.

Nor do I believe that the mystification ever answered much purpose among literary men of eminence beyond the circle of his personal acquaintance. But it would be difficult to suppose that he had ever wished that to be otherwise; it was sufficient for him to set the mob of readers at gaze, and, above all, to escape the annoyance of having productions, actually known to be his, made the daily and hourly topics of discussion in his presence.

Mr. Jeffrey had known Scott from his youth, and, in reviewing *Waver-*

ley, he was at no pains to conceal his conviction of its authorship. He quarrelled, as usual, with carelessness of style, and some inartificialities of plot, but rendered justice to the substantial merits of the work, in language which I shall not mar by abridgment. The Quarterly was far less favourable in its verdict. Indeed, the articles on *Waverley*, and afterwards on *Guy Mannering*, which appeared in that journal, will bear the test of ultimate opinion as badly as any critical pieces which our time has produced. They are written in a captious, cavilling strain of quibble, which shows as complete blindness to the essential interest of the narrative, as the critic betrays on the subject of the Scottish dialogue, which forms its liveliest ornament, when he pronounces that to be "a dark dialogue of Anglied Erse." With this remarkable exception, the professional critics were, on the whole, not slow to confess their belief that, under a hackneyed name and trivial form, there had at last appeared a work of original creative genius, worthy of being placed by the side of the very few real masterpieces of prose fiction. Loftier romance was never blended with easier, quainter humour, by Cervantes himself. In his familiar delineations, he had combined the strength of Smollett with the native elegance and unaffected pathos of Goldsmith; in his darker scenes he had revived that real tragedy which appeared to have left our stage with the age of Shakespeare; and elements of interest so diverse had been blended and interwoven with that nameless grace which, more surely perhaps than even the highest perfection in the command of any one strain of sentiment, marks the master-mind cast in Nature's most felicitous mould.

Scott, with the consciousness avowed long afterwards in his General Preface that he should never in all likelihood have thought of a Scotch novel had he not read Maria Edgeworth's exquisite pieces of Irish character, desired James Ballantyne to send her a copy of *Waverley* on its first appearance, inscribed "from the author." Miss Edgeworth, whom Scott had never then seen, though some literary correspondence had passed between them, thanked the nameless novelist, under cover to Ballantyne, with the cordial generosity of kindred genius.

By the 11th of November, 1814, the Lord of the Isles had made great progress, and Scott had also authorized Ballantyne to negotiate among the booksellers for the publication of a second novel. But before I go further into these transactions, I must introduce the circumstances of Scott's first connection with an able and amiable man, whose services were of high importance to him, at this time and ever after, in the prosecution of his literary labours. Calling at Ballantyne's printing office while *Waverley* was in the press, he happened to take up a proof-sheet of a volume, entitled "Poems, with Notes illustrative of Traditions in Galloway and Ayrshire, by Joseph Train, Supervisor of Excise at Newton Stewart." The sheet contained a ballad on an Ayrshire tradition about a certain "Witch of Carrick" whose skill in the black art was, it seems, instrumental in the destruction of one of the scattered vessels of the Spanish Armada. The ballad begins:—

"Why gallops the palfrey with Lady Dunore?  
Who drives away Turnberry's kine from the shore!

Go tell it in Carrick, and tell it in Kyle—  
 Although the proud Dons are now passing the Moll,\*  
     On this magic clew,  
     That in fairyland grew,  
 Old Elcine de Aggart has taken in hand  
 To wind up their lives ere they win to our strand."

Scott immediately wrote to the author, begging to be included in his list of subscribers for a dozen copies, and suggesting at the same time a verbal alteration in one of the stanzas of this ballad. Mr. Train acknowledged his letter with gratitude, and the little book reached him just as he was about to embark in the Lighthouse yacht. He took it with him on his voyage, and on returning home again, wrote to Mr. Train, expressing the gratification he had received from several of his metrical pieces, but still more from his notes, and requesting him, as he seemed to be enthusiastic about traditions and legends, to communicate any matters of that order connected with Galloway which he might not himself think of turning to account; "for," said Scott, "nothing interests me so much as local anecdotes; and, as the applications for charity usually conclude, the smallest donation will be thankfully accepted."

Mr. Train, in a little narrative with which he has favoured me, says, that for some years before this time he had been engaged, in alliance with a friend of his, Mr. Denniston, in collecting materials for a History of Galloway; they had circulated lists of queries among the clergy and parish schoolmasters, and had thus, and by their own personal researches, accumulated "a great variety of the most excellent materials for that purpose;" but that, from the hour of his correspondence with Walter Scott, he "renounced every idea of authorship for himself," resolving "that thenceforth his chief pursuit should be collecting whatever he thought would be most interesting to *him*," and that Mr. Denniston was easily persuaded to acquiesce in the abandonment of their original design. Ere long, Mr. Train visited Scott both at Edinburgh and at Abbotsford; a true affection continued ever afterwards to be maintained between them; and this generous ally was, as the prefaces to the Waverley Novels signify, one of the earliest confidants of that series of works, and certainly the most efficient of all the author's friends in furnishing him with materials for their composition. Nor did he confine himself to literary services: whatever portable object of antiquarian curiosity met his eye, this good man secured and treasured up with the same destination; and if ever a catalogue of the museum at Abbotsford shall appear, no single contributor, most assuredly, will fill so large a space in it as Mr. Train.

His first considerable communication, after he had formed the unselfish determination above mentioned, consisted of a collection of anecdotes concerning the Galloway gipsies, and "a local story of an astrologer, who called at a farmhouse at the moment when the goodwife was in travail, had, it was said, predicted the future fortune of the child, almost in the words placed in the mouth of John M'Kinlay, in the Introduction to *Guy Mannerling*." Scott told him, in reply, that the story of the astrologer reminded him of "one he had heard in his youth;" that is to say, as the Introduction explains, from this M'Kinlay; but Mr. Train has,

\* The Mull of Cantyre.

since his friend's death, recovered a rude *Durham* ballad, which, in fact, contains a great deal more of the main fable of Guy Mannering than either his own written or M'Kinlay's oral edition of the *Gallovidian* anecdote had conveyed; and—possessing, as I do, numberless evidences of the haste with which Scott drew up his beautiful Prefaces and Introductions of 1829, 1830, and 1831—I am strongly inclined to think that he must in his boyhood have read the *Durham* broadside or chapbook itself, as well as heard the old serving-man's Scottish version of it.

However this may have been, Scott's answer to Mr. Train proceeded in these words: "I am now to solicit a favour, which I think your interest in Scottish antiquities will induce you readily to comply with. I am very desirous to have some account of the present state of *Turnberry Castle*: whether any vestiges of it remain; what is the appearance of the ground; the names of the neighbouring places; and, above all, what are the traditions of the place (if any) concerning its memorable surprise by Bruce, upon his return from the coast of Ireland, in the commencement of the brilliant part of his career. The purpose of this is to furnish some hints for notes to a work in which I am now engaged, and I need not say I will have great pleasure in mentioning the source from which I derive my information. I have only to add, with the modest importunity of a lazy correspondent, that the sooner you oblige me with an answer (if you can assist me on the subject) the greater will the obligation be on me, who am already your obliged humble servant,

"W. SCOTT."

The recurrence of the word *Turnberry* in the ballad of Elcine de Aggart had of course suggested this application, which was dated on the 7th of November. "I had often," says Mr. Train, "when a boy, climbed the brown hills and traversed the shores of Carrick, but I could not sufficiently remember the exact places and distances as to which Mr. Scott inquired; so, immediately on receipt of his letter, I made a journey into Ayrshire to collect all the information I possibly could, and forwarded it to him on the 18th of the same month." Among the particulars thus communicated, was the local superstition that on the anniversary of the night when Bruce landed at Turnberry from Arran, the same meteoric gleam which had attended his voyage reappeared, unfailingly, in the same quarter of the heavens. With this circumstance Scott was much struck. "Your information," he writes on the 22nd November, "was particularly interesting and acceptable, especially that which relates to the supposed preternatural appearance of the fire, &c., which I hope to make some use of." What use he did make of it, if any reader has forgotten, will be seen by reference to stanzas 7—17 of the fifth canto of the poem; and the notes to the same canto embody, with due acknowledgment, the more authentic results of Mr. Train's pilgrimage to Carrick.

He writes, on the 25th December, to Constable that he had "corrected the last proofs (i.e., of the *Lord of the Isles*), and was setting out to Abbotsford to refresh the machine." And in what did his refreshment of the machine consist? Besides having written within this year the greater part (almost, I believe, the whole) of the *Life of Swift*, *Waverley*, and the *Lord of the Isles*, he had given two essays to the *Encyclopædia Supple-*

ment, and published, with an Introduction and notes, one of the most curious pieces of family history ever produced to the world, on which he laboured with more than usual zeal and diligence, from his warm affection for the noble representative of its author. This inimitable "*Memorie of the Somervilles*" came out in October; and it was speedily followed by an annotated reprint of the strange old treatise, entitled "Rowland's Letting off the Humours of the Blood in the Head Vein, 1611." He had also kept up his private correspondence on a scale which I believe never to have been exemplified in the case of any other person who wrote continually for the press—except, perhaps, Voltaire; and, to say nothing of strictly professional duties, he had, as a vast heap of documents now before me proves, superintended from day to day, except during his Hebridean voyage, the still perplexed concerns of the Ballantynes, with a watchful assiduity that might have done credit to the most diligent of tradesmen. The "machine" might truly require "refreshment."

It was, as has been seen, on the 7th of November that Scott acknowledged the receipt of that communication from Mr. Train which included the story of the Galloway astrologer. There can be no doubt that this story recalled to his mind, if not the Durham ballad, the similar but more detailed corruption of it which he had heard told by his father's servant, John M'Kinlay, in the days of George's Square and Green Breeks, and which he has preserved in the Introduction to *Guy Mannering*, as the groundwork of that tale. The three last cantos of the *Lord of the Isles* were written between the 11th of November and the 25th of December; and it is therefore scarcely to be supposed that any part of this novel had been penned before he thus talked of "refreshing the machine."

*Guy Mannering* was published on the 24th of February—that is, exactly two months after the *Lord of the Isles* was dismissed from the author's desk; and—making but a narrow allowance for the operations of the transcriber, printer, bookseller, &c.—I think the dates I have gathered together confirm the accuracy of what I have often heard Scott say, that his second novel "was the work of six weeks at a Christmas." Such was his recipe "for refreshing the machine."

I am sorry to have to add that this severity of labour, like the repetition of it which had such deplorable effects at a later period of his life, was the result of his anxiety to acquit himself of obligations arising out of his connection with the commercial speculations of the Ballantynes. The approach of Christmas, 1814, brought with it the prospect of such a recurrence of difficulties about the discount of John's bills, as to render it absolutely necessary that Scott should either apply again for assistance to his private friends, or task his literary powers with some such extravagant effort as has now been recorded. The great object, which was still to get rid of the heavy stock that had been accumulated before the May, 1813, at length determined the chief partner to break up, as soon as possible, the concern which his own sanguine rashness, and the gross irregularities of his mercurial lieutenant, had so lamentably perplexed; but Constable, having already enabled the firm to avoid public exposure more than once, was not now, any more than when he made his contract for the *Lord of the Isles*, disposed to burden himself with an additional load of Weber's "*Beaumont and Fletcher*," and other almost

as unsaleable books. While they were still in hopes of overcoming his scruples, it happened that a worthy friend of Scott's, the late Mr. Charles Erskine, his Sheriff-Substitute in Selkirkshire, had immediate occasion for a sum of money which he had some time before advanced, at Scott's personal request, to the firm of John Ballantyne and Company; and, on receiving his application, Scott wrote as follows :—

“DEAR JOHN,—

“Charles Erskine wishes his money, as he has made a purchase of land. This is a new perplexity—for paid he must be forthwith—as his advance was friendly and confidential. I do not at this moment see how it is to be raised, but believe I shall find means. In the meanwhile, it will be necessary to propitiate the Leviathans of Paternoster Row. My idea is, that you or James should write to them to the following effect:—That a novel is offered you by the author of *Waverley*; that the author is desirous it should be out before Mr. Scott's poem, or as soon thereafter as possible; and that having resolved, as they are aware, to relinquish publishing, you only wish to avail yourselves of this offer to the extent of helping off some of your stock. I leave it to you to consider whether you should condescend on any particular work to offer them as bread to their butter—or on any particular amount—as £500. One thing must be provided, that Constable shares to the extent of the Scottish sale—they, however, managing. My reason for letting them have this scent of roast meat is, in case it should be necessary for us to apply to them to renew bills in December.”

Upon receiving this letter, John Ballantyne suggested to Scott that he should be allowed to offer, not only the new novel, but the next edition of *Waverley*, to Longman, Murray, or Blackwood, in the hope that the prospect of being let in to the profits of the already established favourite would overcome effectually the hesitation of one or other of these houses about venturing on the encumbrance which Constable seemed to shrink from with such pertinacity; but upon this ingenious proposition Scott at once set his *veto*. “Dear John,” he writes (Oct. 17, 1814), “your expedients are all wretched, as far as regards me. I will never give Constable or any one room to say I have broken my word with him in the slightest degree. If I lose everything else, I will at least keep my honour unblemished; and I do hold myself bound in honour to offer him a *Waverley*, while he shall continue to comply with the conditions annexed. I intend the new novel to operate as something more permanent than a mere accommodation; and if I can but be permitted to do so, I will print it before it is sold to any one, and then propose—first, to Constable and Longman; second, to Murray and Blackwood—to take the whole at such a rate as will give them one-half of the fair profits, granting acceptances which, upon an edition of 3,000, which we shall be quite authorized to print, will amount to an immediate command of £1,500; and to this we may couple the condition that they must take £500 or £600 of the old stock. I own I am not solicitous to deal with Constable alone, nor am I at all bound to offer him the new novel on any terms; but he, knowing of the intention, may expect to be treated with at least, although it is possible we may not deal. However, if Murray and Blackwood were to

come forward with any handsome proposal as to the stock, I should certainly have no objection to James's giving the pledge of the author of *W.* for the next work. You are like the crane in the fable, when you boast of not having got anything from the business; you may thank God that it did not bite your head off. Would to God I were at let-a-be for let-a-be; but you have done your best, and so must I. Yours truly,  
"W. S."

Both Mr. Murray and Longman's partner, Mr. Rees, were in Scotland about this time, and the former at least paid Scott a visit at Abbotsford. Of course, however, whatever propositions they may have made, were received by one or other of the Ballantynes. The result was that the house of Longman undertook *Guy Mannering* on the terms dictated by Scott—namely, granting bills for £1,500, and relieving John Ballantyne and Company of stock to the extent of £500 more; and Constable's first information of the transaction was from Messrs. Longman themselves, when they, in compliance with Scott's wish as signified in the letter last quoted, offered him a share in the edition which they had purchased. With one or two exceptions, originating in circumstances nearly similar, the house of Constable published all the subsequent series of the *Waverley Novels*.

I must not, however, forget that the *Lord of the Isles* was published a month before *Guy Mannering*. The poem was received with an interest much heightened by the recent and growing success of the mysterious *Waverley*. Its appearance, so rapidly following that novel, and accompanied with the announcement of another prose tale, just about to be published, by the same hand, puzzled and confounded the mob of dullness. The more sagacious few said to themselves—Scott is making one serious effort more in his old line, and by this it will be determined whether he does or does not altogether renounce that for his new one.

This poem is now, I believe, about as popular as *Rokeby*; but it has never reached the same station in general favour with the *Lay*, *Marmion*, or the *Lady of the Lake*. The first edition of 1,800 copies in 4to, was, however, rapidly disposed of, and the separate editions in 8vo, which ensued before his poetical works were collected, amounted together to 12,250 copies. This, in the case of almost any other author, would have been splendid success; but as compared with what he had previously experienced, even in his *Rokeby*, and still more so as compared with the enormous circulation at once attained by Lord Byron's early tales, which were then following each other in almost breathless succession, the falling off was decided. One evening, some days after the poem had been published, Scott requested James Ballantyne to call on him, and the printer found him alone in his library, working at the third volume of *Guy Mannering*. I give what follows from Ballantyne's *Memoirs*:—"Well, James," he said, "I have given you a week—what are people saying about the *Lord of the Isles*?" I hesitated a little, after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point. "Come," he said, "speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony *with me* all of a sudden? But, I see how it is, the result is given in one word—*Disappointment*." My silence

admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds ; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event, for it is a singular fact that before the public, or rather the booksellers, had given their decision, he no more knew whether he had written well or ill, than whether a die thrown out of a box was to turn up a size or an ace. However, he instantly resumed his spirits, and expressed his wonder rather that his poetical popularity should have lasted so long, than that it should have now at last given way. At length he said with perfect cheerfulness, 'Well, well, James, so be it ; but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed, we must just stick to something else ;'—and so he dismissed me, and resumed his novel."

Ballantyne concludes the anecdote in these words :—"He spoke thus, probably unaware of the undiscovered wonders then slumbering in his mind. Yet still he could not but have felt that the production of a few poems was nothing in comparison of what must be in reserve for him, for he was at this time scarcely more than forty.\* An evening or two after, I called again on him, and found on the table a copy of the *Giaour*, which he seemed to have been reading. Having an enthusiastic young lady in my house, I asked him if I might carry the book home with me ; but chancing to glance on the autograph blazon, '*To the Monarch of Parnassus, from one of his subjects*,' instantly retracted my request, and said I had not observed Lord Byron's inscription before. 'What inscription?' said he. 'Oh, yes, I had forgot ; but inscription or no inscription, you are equally welcome.' I again took it up, and he continued, 'James, Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow.' At this time he had never seen Byron, but I knew he meant soon to be in London, when, no doubt, the mighty consummation of the meeting of the two bards would be accomplished ; and I ventured to say that he must be looking forward to it with some interest. His countenance became fixed, and he answered impressively, 'Oh, of course.' In a minute or two afterwards he rose from his chair, paced the room at a very rapid rate, which was his practice in certain moods of mind, then made a dead halt, and bursting into an extravaganza of laughter, 'James,' cried he, 'I'll tell you what Byron should say to me when we are about to accost each other—

"Art thou the man whom men famed Grizzle call ;"

'And then how germane would be my answer—

"Art thou the still more famed Tom Thumb the small !"

"This," says the printer, "is a specimen of his peculiar humour ; it kept him full of mirth for the rest of the evening."

The whole of the scene strikes me as equally and delightfully characteristic—I may add, hardly more so of Scott than of his printer. ~~for~~ Ballantyne, with all his profound worship of his friend and benefactor, was in truth, even more than he, an undoubting acquiescer in "the decision of the public, or rather of the booksellers ;" and among the many absurdities into which his reverence for the popedom of Paternoster Row

\* He was not forty-four till August, 1815.

led him, I never could but consider, with special astonishment, the facility with which he seemed to have adopted the notion that the Byron of 1814 was really entitled to supplant Scott as a popular poet. Appreciating, as a man of his talents could hardly fail to do, the splendidly original glow and depth of Childe Harold, he always appeared to me quite blind to the fact that in the *Giaour*, in the *Bride of Abydos*, in *Parisina*, and indeed, in all his early serious narratives, Byron owed at least half his success to clever, though perhaps unconscious, imitation of Scott, and no trivial share of the rest to the lavish use of materials which Scott never employed, only because his genius was, from the beginning to the end of his career, under the guidance of high and chivalrous feelings of moral rectitude. All this Lord Byron himself seems to have felt most completely—as witness the whole sequence of his letters and diaries.

If January brought Scott disappointment, there was abundant consolation in store for February, 1815. *Guy Mannerings* was received with eager curiosity, and pronounced by acclamation fully worthy to share the honours of *Waverley*. The easy transparent flow of its style; the beautiful simplicity, and here and there the wild solemn magnificence of its sketches of scenery; the rapid, ever-heightening interest of the narrative; the unaffected kindliness of feeling, the manly purity of thought, everywhere mingled with a gentle humour and a homely sagacity; but above all, the rich variety and skilful contrast of characters and manners, at once fresh in fiction and stamped with the unforgeable seal of truth and nature: these were charms that spoke to every heart and mind; and the few murmurs of pedantic criticism were lost in the voice of general delight, which never fails to welcome the invention that introduces to the sympathy of imagination a new group of immortal realities.

The first edition was, like that of *Waverley*, in three little volumes, with a humility of paper and printing which the meanest novelist would now disdain to imitate; the price a guinea. The 2,000 copies of which it consisted were sold the day after the publication; and within three months came a second and a third impression, making together 5,000 copies more. The sale, before those novels began to be collected, had reached nearly 10,000; and since then (to say nothing of foreign reprints of the text, and myriads of translations into every tongue of Europe) the domestic sale has amounted to 50,000.

On the rising of the Court of Session in March, Mr. and Mrs. Scott went by sea to London with their eldest girl, whom, being yet too young for general society, they deposited with Joanna Baillie at Hampstead, while they themselves resumed, for two months, their usual quarters at kind Miss Dumergue's, in Piccadilly. Six years had elapsed since Scott last appeared in the metropolis; and brilliant as his reception had then been, it was still more so on the present occasion. Scotland had been visited in the interim, chiefly from the interest excited by his writings, by crowds of the English nobility, most of whom had found introduction to his personal acquaintance—not a few had partaken of his hospitality at Ashiestiel or Abbotsford. The generation among whom, I presume, a genius of this order feels his own influence with the proudest and sweetest confidence—on whose fresh minds and ears he has himself made the

first indelible impressions—the generation with whose earliest romance of the heart and fancy his idea had been blended, was now grown to the full stature; the success of these recent novels, seen on every table, the subject of every conversation, had, with those who did not doubt their parentage, far more than counterweighed his declination, dubious after all, in the poetical balance; while the mystery that hung over them quickened the curiosity of the hesitating and conjecturing many; and the name on which ever and anon some new circumstance accumulated stronger suspicion, loomed larger through the haze in which he had thought fit to envelope it. Moreover, this was a period of high national pride and excitement.

At such a time Prince and people were well prepared to hail him who, more perhaps than any other master of the pen, had contributed to sustain the spirit of England throughout the struggle, which was as yet supposed to have been terminated on the field of Thoulouse. "Thank Heaven you are coming at last," Joanna Baillie had written a month or two before. "Make up your mind to be stared at only a little less than the Czar of Muscovy, or old Blucher."

And now took place James Ballantyne's "mighty consummation of the meeting of the two bards." Scott's own account of it, in a letter to Mr. Moore, must be in the hands of most of my readers; yet I think it ought also to find a place here. "It was," says Scott, "in the spring of 1815 that, chancing to be in London, I had the advantage of a personal introduction to Lord Byron. Report had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and a quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind. We met for an hour or two almost daily, in Mr. Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. We also met frequently in parties and evening society, so that for about two months I had the advantage of a considerable intimacy with this distinguished individual. Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions. I remember saying to him, that I really thought that if he lived a few years he would alter his sentiments. He answered, rather sharply, 'I suppose you are one of those who prophesy I shall turn Methodist.' I replied, 'No—I don't expect your conversion to be of such an ordinary kind. I would rather look to see you retreat upon the Catholic faith, and distinguish yourself by the austerity of your penances. The species of religion to which you must, or may, one day attach yourself, must exercise a strong power on the imagination.' He smiled gravely, and seemed to allow I might be right.

"On politics, he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism; but it appeared to me that the pleasure afforded him, as a vehicle for displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office, was at the bottom of this habit of thinking, rather than any real conviction of the political principles on which he talked. He was certainly proud of his rank and ancient family, and, in that respect, as much an aristocrat as was consistent with good sense and good breeding. Some

disgust, how adopted I know not, seemed to me to have given this peculiar, and, as it appeared to me, contradictory cast of mind; but, at heart, I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle.

"Lord Byron's reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive either in poetry or history. Having the advantage of him in that respect, and possessing a good competent share of such reading as is little read, I was sometimes able to put under his eye objects which had for him the interest of novelty. I remember particularly repeating to him the fine poem of Hardyknute, an imitation of the old Scottish ballad, with which he was so much affected, that some one who was in the same apartment asked me what I could possibly have been telling Byron by which he was so much agitated.

"I saw Byron for the last time in 1815, after I returned from France. He dined, or lunched, with me at Long's, in Bond Street. I never saw him so full of gaiety and good humour, to which the presence of Mr. Mathews, the comedian, added not a little. Poor Terry was also present. After one of the gayest parties I ever was present at, my fellow-traveller, Mr. Scott of Gala, and I set off for Scotland, and I never saw Lord Byron again. Several letters passed between us—one perhaps every half-year. Like the old heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts. I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the Iliad, for Byron sent me, some time after, a large sepulchral vase of silver. It was full of dead men's bones, and had inscriptions on two sides of the base. One ran thus:—'The bones contained in this urn were found in certain ancient sepulchres within the long walls of Athens, in the month of February, 1811.' The other face bears the lines of Juvenal—'*Expende —quot libras en duce summo invenies?—Mors sola fatetur quantula vini hominum corpuscula.*'

"To these I have added a third inscription in these words—'The gift of Lord Byron to Walter Scott.\* There was a letter with this vase, more valuable to me than the gift itself, from the kindness with which the donor expressed himself towards me. I left it naturally in the urn with the bones, but it is now missing. As the theft was not of a nature to be practised by a mere domestic, I am compelled to suspect the inhospitality of some individual of higher station, most gratuitously exercised, certainly, since after what I have here said no one will probably choose to boast of possessing this literary curiosity.

"We had a good deal of laughing, I remember, on what the public might be supposed to think or say concerning the gloomy and ominous nature of our mutual gifts.

"I think I can add little more to my recollections of Byron. He was often melancholy—almost gloomy. When I observed him in this humour,

Mr. Murray had, at the time of giving the vase, suggested to Lord Byron that it would increase the value of the gift to add some such inscription, but the noble poet answered modestly,—

"April 9, 1815.

"DEAR MURRAY,—I have a great objection to your proposition about inscribing the vase—which is, that it would appear *ostentatious* on my part; and of course I must send it as it is, without any alteration. Yours ever, "BYRON."

I used either to wait till it went off of its own accord, or till some natural and easy mode occurred of leading him into conversation, when the shadows almost always left his countenance, like the mist rising from a landscape. In conversation he was very animated.

"I met with him very frequently in society, our mutual acquaintances doing me the honour to think that he liked to meet with me. Some very agreeable parties I can recollect—particularly one at Sir George Beaumont's—where the amiable landlord had assembled some persons distinguished for talent. Of these I need only mention the late Sir Humphry Davy, whose talents for literature were as remarkable as his empire over science. Mr. Richard Sharpe and Mr. Rogers were also present.

"I think I also remarked in Byron's temper starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret, and perhaps offensive, meaning in something casually said to him. In this case I also judged it best to let his mind, like a troubled spring, work itself clear, which it did in a minute or two. I was considerably older, you will recollect, than my noble friend, and had no reason to fear his misconstruing my sentiments towards him, nor had I ever the slightest reason to doubt that they were kindly returned on his part. If I had occasion to be mortified by the display of genius which threw into the shade such pretensions as I was then supposed to possess, I might console myself that, in my own case, the materials of mental happiness had been mingled in a greater proportion.

"I rummage my brains in vain for what often rushes into my head unbidden—little traits and sayings which recall his looks, manner, tone, and gestures; and I have always continued to think that a crisis of life was arrived in which a new career of fame was opened to him, and that had he been permitted to start upon it, he would have obliterated the memory of such parts of his life as friends would wish to forget."

I have nothing to add to this interesting passage, except that Joanna Baillie's tragedy of the Family Legend being performed at one of the theatres during Scott's stay in town, Lord Byron accompanied the authoress and Mr. and Mrs. Scott to witness the representation; and that the vase with the Attic bones appears to have been sent to Scott very soon after his arrival in London, not, as Mr. Moore had gathered from the hasty diction of his "Reminiscences," at some "subsequent period of their acquaintance."

It was also in the spring of 1815 that Scott had, for the first time, the honour of being presented to the Prince Regent. His Royal Highness had signified, more than a year before this time, his wish that the poet should revisit London—and, on reading his Edinburgh Address in particular, he said to Mr. Dundas, that "Walter Scott's charming behaviour about the laureateship had made him doubly desirous of seeing him at Carlton House." More lately, on receiving a copy of the Lord of the Isles, his Royal Highness's librarian had been commanded to it him in these terms:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"You are deservedly so great a favourite with the Prince Regent, that his librarian is not only directed to return you the thanks of his Royal

Highness for your valuable present, but to inform you that the Prince Regent particularly wishes to see you whenever you come to London ; and desires you will always, when you are there, come into his library whenever you please. Believe me always, with sincerity, one of your warmest admirers and most obliged friends,

"J. S. CLARKE."

On hearing from Mr. Croker (then Secretary to the Admiralty) that Scott was to be in town by the middle of March, the Prince said, "Let me know when he comes, and I'll get up a snug little dinner that will suit him ;" and, after he had been presented and graciously received at the *levee*, he was invited to dinner accordingly, through his excellent friend Mr. Adam (now Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court in Scotland), who at that time held a confidential office in the royal household. The Regent had consulted with Mr. Adam also as to the composition of the party. "Let us have," said he, "just a few friends of his owl—and the more Scotch the better ;" and both the Chief Commissioner and Mr. Croker assure me that the party was the most interesting and agreeable one in their recollection. It comprised, I believe, the Duke of York, the late Duke of Gordon (then Marquis of Huntly), the Marquis of Hertford (then Lord Yarmouth), the Earl of Fife, and Scott's early friend Lord Melville. "The Prince and Scott," says Mr. Croker, "were the two most brilliant story-tellers in their several ways, that I have ever happened to meet ; they were both aware of their *forte*, and both exerted themselves that evening with delightful effect. On going home, I really could not decide which of them had shone the most. The Regent was enchanted with Scott, as Scott with him ; and on all his subsequent visits to London, he was a frequent guest to the royal table." The Lord Chief Commissioner remembers that the Prince was particularly delighted with the poet's anecdotes of the old Scotch judges and lawyers, which his Royal Highness sometimes *capped* by ludicrous traits of certain ermined sages of his own acquaintance. Scott told, among others, a story, which he was fond of telling, of his old friend the Lord Justice-Clerk Braxfield ; and the commentary of his Royal Highness on hearing it amused Scott, who often mentioned it afterwards. The anecdote is this :—Braxfield, whenever he went on a particular circuit, was in the habit of visiting a gentleman of good fortune in the neighbourhood of one of the assize towns, and staying at least one night, which, being both of them ardent chess-players, they usually concluded with their favourite game. One spring circuit the battle was not decided at daybreak, so the Justice-Clerk said, "Weel, Donald, I must e'en come back this gate in the harvest, and let the game lie ower for the present ;" and back he came in October, but not to his old friend's hospitable house ; for that gentleman had, in the interim, been apprehended on a capital charge (of forgery), and this same stood on the *Porteous Roll*, or list of those who were about to be tried under his former guest's auspices. The laird was indicted and tried accordingly, and the jury returned a verdict of *guilty*. Braxfield forthwith put on his cocked hat (which answers to the black cap in England), and pronounced the sentence of the law in the usual terms, "To be hanged by the neck until you be dead ; and may the Lord have mercy upon your unhappy soul !" Having concluded this awful formula in

his most sonorous cadence, Braxfield, dismounting his formidable beaver, gave a familiar nod to his unfortunate acquaintance, and said to him, in a sort of chuckling whisper, "And now, Donald, my man, I think I've checkmated you for ance." The Regent laughed heartily at this specimen of Macqueen's brutal humour; and "I faith, Walter," said he, "this old bigwig seems to have taken things as coolly as my tyrannical self. Don't you remember Tom Moore's description of me at breakfast,

"The table spread with tea and toast,  
Death-warrants and the Morning Post'?"

Towards midnight, the Prince called for "a bumper, with all the honours, to the Author of Waverley," and looked significantly, as he was charging his own glass, to Scott. Scott seemed somewhat puzzled for a moment, but instantly recovering himself, and filling his glass to the brim, said, "Your Royal Highness looks as if you thought I had some claim to the honours of this toast. I have no such pretensions, but shall take good care that the real Simon Pure hears of the high compliment that has now been paid to him." He then drank off his claret, and joined with a stentorian voice in the cheering, which the Prince himself timed. But before the company could resume their seats, his Royal Highness exclaimed, "Another of the same, if you please, to the Author of Marmion—and now, Walter, my man, I have checkmated you for *ance*." The second bumper was followed by cheers still more prolonged; and Scott then rose and returned thanks in a short address, which struck the Lord Chief Commissioner as "alike grave and graceful." This story has been circulated in a very perverted shape. I now give it on the authority of my venerated friend, who was—unlike, perhaps, some others of the company at that hour—able to hear accurately, and content to *see single*. He adds, that having occasion, the day after, to call on the Duke of York, his Royal Highness said to him, "Upon my word, Adam, my brother went rather too near the wind about Waverley; but nobody could have turned the thing more prettily than Walter Scott did—and upon the whole I never had better fun."

The Regent, as was his custom with those he most delighted to honour, uniformly addressed the poet, even at their first dinner, by his Christian name, "Walter."

Before he left town he again dined at Carlton House, when the party was a still smaller one than before, and the merriment, if possible, still more free. That nothing might be wanting, the Prince sung several capital songs in the course of that evening, as witness the lines in *Sultan Serendib*—

"I love a Prince will bid the bottle pass;  
Exchanging with his subjects glance and glass,  
In fitting time can, gayest of the gay,  
Keep up the jest and mingle in the lay.  
Such monarchs best our freeborn humour suit,  
But despots must be stately, stern, and mute."

Before he returned to Edinburgh, on the 22nd of May, the Regent sent him a gold snuff-box, set in brilliants, with a medallion of his Royal Highness's head on the lid, "as a testimony" (writes Mr. Adam, in trans-

mitting it) "of the high opinion his Royal Highness entertains of your genius and merit.

I transcribe what follows, from James Ballantyne's *Memoranda* :— "After Mr. Scott's first interview with his Sovereign, one or two intimate friends took the liberty of inquiring what judgment he had formed of the Regent's talents. He declined giving any definite answer, but repeated, that 'he was the first gentleman he had seen—certainly the first *English* gentleman of his day ;—there was something about him, which, independently of the *prestige*, the "divinity," which hedges a King, marked him as standing entirely by himself; but as to his abilities, spoken of as distinct from his charming manners, how could any one form a fair judgment of that man who introduced whatever subject he chose, discussed it just as long as he chose, and dismissed it when he chose?'"

Ballantyne adds, "What I have now to say is more important, not only in itself, but as it will enable you to give a final contradiction to an injurious report which has been in circulation; viz., that the Regent asked him as to the authorship of *Waverley*, and received a distinct and solemn denial. I took the bold freedom of requesting to know *from him* whether his Royal Highness had questioned him on that subject, and what had been his answer. He glanced at me with a look of wild surprise, and said, 'What answer I might have made to such a question, put to me by my Sovereign, perhaps I do not, or rather perhaps I do know; but I was never put to the test. He is far too well-bred a man ever to put so ill-bred a question.'"

During Scott's residence in London in April, 1815, he lost one of the English friends, to a meeting with whom he had looked forward with the highest pleasure. Mr. George Ellis died on the 15th of that month, at his seat of Sunninghill. This threw a cloud over what would otherwise have been a period of unmixed enjoyment. Mr. Canning penned the epitaph for that dearest of his friends; but he submitted it to Scott's consideration before it was engraved.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SCOTT VISITS WATERLOO AND PARIS—SCOTT AND BYRON—RETURN TO  
ABBOTSFORD—POEM OF WATERLOO PUBLISHED.

GOETHE expressed, I fancy, a very general sentiment, when he said that to him the great charm and value of my friend's *Life of Buonaparte* seemed quite independent of the question of its accuracy as to small details; that he turned eagerly to the book, not to find dates sifted, and counter-marches analysed, but to contemplate what could not but be a true record of the broad impressions made on the mind of Scott by the marvellous revolutions of his own time in their progress. Feeling how justly in the main that work has preserved those impressions, though gracefully softened and sobered in the retrospect of peaceful and more advanced years, I the less regret that I have it not in my power to quote any letters of his touching the reappearance of Napoleon on the soil of France—the immortal march from Cannes—the reign of the Hundred Days, and the preparations for another struggle, which fixed the gaze of Europe in May, 1815.

That Scott should have been among the first civilians who hurried over to see the field of Waterloo, and hear English bugles sound about the walls of Paris, could have surprised none who knew the lively concern he had always taken in the military efforts of his countrymen, and the career of the illustrious captain who had taught them to re-establish the renown of Agincourt and Blenheim,—

“Victor of Assaye’s Eastern plain,  
Victor of all the fields of Spain.”

I had often heard him say, however, that his determination <sup>was</sup>, if not fixed, much quickened, by a letter of an old acquaintance of his, who had, on the arrival of the news of the 18th of June, instantly repaired to Brussels, to tender his professional skill in aid of the overburdened medical staff of the conqueror’s army. When, therefore, I found the letter in question preserved among Scott’s papers, I perused it with a peculiar interest; and I now venture, with the writer’s permission, to present it to the reader. It was addressed by Sir Charles Bell to his brother, an eminent barrister in Edinburgh, who transmitted it to Scott. “When I read it,” said he, “it set me on fire.” The marriage of Miss Maclean, Clephane of Torloisk with the Earl of Compton (now Marquis of Northampton), which took place on the 24th of July, was in fact the only cause why he did not leave Scotland instantly; for that dear young friend had chosen Scott for her guardian, and on him accordingly devolved the chief care of the arrangements on this occasion. The extract sent to him by Mr. Joseph Bell is as follows:—

"Brussels, 2nd July, 1815.

"This country, the finest in the world, has been of late quite out of our minds. I did not, in any degree, anticipate the pleasure I should enjoy, the admiration forced from me, on coming into one of these antique towns, or in journeying through this rich garden. Can you recollect the time when there were gentlemen meeting at the Cross of Edinburgh, or those whom we thought such? They are all collected here. You see the very men, with their scraggy necks sticking out of the collars of their old-fashioned square-skirted coats—their canes—their cocked hats; and, when they meet, the formal bow, the hat off to the ground, and the powder flying in the wind. I could divert you with the odd resemblances of the Scottish faces among the peasants, too—but I noted *them* at the time with my pencil, and I write to you only of things that you won't find in my pocket-book.

"I have just returned from seeing the French wounded received in their hospital; and could you see them laid out naked, or almost so—100 in a row of low beds on the ground—though wounded, exhausted, beaten, you would still conclude with me that these were men capable of marching unopposed from the west of Europe to the east of Asia. Strong, thickset, hardy veterans, brave spirits and unsubdued, as they cast their wild glance upon you,—their black eyes and brown cheeks finely contrasted with the fresh sheets,—you would much admire their capacity of adaptation. These fellows are brought from the field after lying many days on the ground; many dying—many in the agony—many miserably racked with pain and spasms; and the next mimics his fellow, and gives it a tune,—*Aha, vous chantez bien!* How they are wounded you will see in my notes. But I must not have you to lose the present impression on me of the formidable nature of these fellows as exemplars of the breed in France. It is a forced praise; for from all I have seen and all I have heard of their fierceness, cruelty, and bloodthirstiness, I cannot convey to you my detestation of this race of trained banditti. By what means they are to be kept in subjection until other habits come upon them, I knew not; but I am convinced that these men cannot be left to the bent of their propensities.

"This superb city is now ornamented with the finest groups of armed men that the most romantic fancy could dream of. I was struck with the words of a friend—E.: 'I saw,' said he, '*that* man returning from the field on the 16th.'—(This was a Brunswicker of the Black or Death Hussars.)—'He was wounded, and had had his arm amputated on the field. He was among the first that came in. He rode straight and stark upon his horse—the bloody clouts about his stump—pale as death, but upright, with a stern, fixed expression of feature, as if loth to lose his revenge.' These troops are very remarkable in their fine military ~~appearances~~, their dark and ominous dress sets off to advantage their strong, manly northern features and white mustachios; and there is something more than commonly impressive about the whole effect.

"This is the second Sunday after the battle, and many are not yet dressed. There are 20,000 wounded in this town, besides those in the hospitals, and the many in the other towns;—only 3,000 prisoners; 80,000, they say, killed and wounded on both sides'

I think it not wonderful that this extract should have set Scott's imagination effectually on fire; that he should have grasped at the idea of seeing probably the last shadows of real warfare that his own age would afford; or that some parts of the great surgeon's simple phraseology are reproduced, almost verbatim, in the first of "Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk." No sooner was Scott's purpose known, than some of his young neighbours in the country proposed to join his excursion; and, in company with three of them, namely, his kinsman John Scott of Gala—Alexander Pringle, the younger, of Whytbank (now M.P. for Selkirkshire)—and Robert Bruce, advocate (now Sheriff of Argyle)—he left Edinburgh for the south, at 5 A.M. on the 27th of July.

They travelled by the stage-coach, and took the route of Hull and Lincoln to Cambridge; for *Gala* and *Whytbank*, being both members of that university, were anxious to seize this opportunity of revisiting it themselves, and showing its beautiful architecture to their friend. After this wish had been gratified, they proceeded to Harwich, and thence, on the 3rd of August, took ship for Helvoetsluys.

"The weather was beautiful," says Gala, "so we all went outside the coach from Cambridge to Harwich. At starting, there was a general complaint of thirst, the consequence of some experiments overnight on the celebrated *bishop* of my *Alma Mater*; our friend, however, was in great glee, and never was a merrier *basket* than he made it all the morning. He had cautioned us, on leaving Edinburgh, never to *name names* in such situations, and our adherence to this rule was rewarded by some amusing incidents. For example, as we entered the town where we were to dine, a heavy-looking man, who was to stop there, took occasion to thank Scott for the pleasure his anecdotes had afforded him: 'You have a good memory, sir,' said he; 'mayhap, now, you sometimes write down what you hear or be a-reading about?' He answered very gravely, that he did occasionally put down a *few* notes, if anything struck him particularly. In the afternoon, it happened that he sat on the box, while the rest of us were behind him. Here, by degrees, he became quite absorbed in his own reflections. He frequently repeated to himself, or *composed* perhaps, for a good while, and often smiled or raised his hand, seeming completely occupied and amused. His neighbour, a vastly scientific and rather grave professor, in a smooth drab Benjamin and broad-brimmed beaver, cast many a curious sidelong glance at him, evidently suspecting that all was not right with the upper story, but preserved perfect politeness. The poet was, however, discovered by the captain of the vessel in which we crossed the Channel, and a perilous passage it was, chiefly in consequence of the unceasing tumblers in which this worthy kept drinking his health."

Before leaving Edinburgh, Scott had settled in his mind the plan of "Paul's Letters;" for on that same day, his agent, John Ballantyne, addressed the following letter from his marine villa near Newhaven:—

"DEAR SIRS,—

"Mr. Scott left town to-day for the Continent. He proposes writing from thence a series of letters on a peculiar plan, varied in matter and style, and to different supposititious correspondents.

"The work is to form a demy 8vo volume of twenty-two sheets, to sell

at 12s. It is to be begun immediately on his arrival in France, and to be published, if possible, the second week of September, when he proposes to return.

"We print 3,000 of this, and I am empowered to offer you one-third of the edition, Messrs. Longman and Co. and Mr. Murray having each the same share : the terms, twelve months' acceptance for paper and print, and half profits at six months, granted now, as under. The over copies will pay the charge for advertising. I am, &c. "JOHN BALLANTYNE

"Charge.

22 sheets printing..	£3	15	0	...	...	...	£82	10	0
145 reams demy .....	1	10	0	...	...	...	217	10	0
3,000 at 8s....	£1,200	0	0				£300	0	0
Cost.....	300	0	0						

£900 0 0 Profit—one-half is £450."

Before Scott reached Harwich, he knew that this offer had been accepted without hesitation ; and thenceforth, accordingly, he threw his daily letters to his wife into the form of communications meant for an imaginary group, consisting of a spinster sister, a statistical laird, a rural clergyman of the Presbyterian Kirk, and a brother, a veteran officer on half-pay. The rank of this last personage corresponded, however, exactly with that of his own elder brother, John Scott, who also, like the Major of the book, had served in the Duke of York's unfortunate campaign of 1797 ; the sister is only a slender disguise for his aunt Christian Rutherford, already often mentioned ; Lord Somerville, long President of the Board of Agriculture, was Paul's laird ; and the shrewd and unbogoted Dr. Douglas of Galashiels was his "minister of the Gospel." These epistles, after having been devoured by the little circle at Abbotsford, were transmitted to Major John Scott, his mother, and Miss Rutherford in Edinburgh ; from their hands they passed to those of James Ballantyne and Mr. Erskine, both of whom assured me that the copy ultimately sent to the press consisted, in great part, of the identical sheets that had successively reached Melrose through the post. The rest had of course been, as Ballantyne expresses it, "somewhat cobbled ;" but, on the whole, Paul's Letters are to be considered as a true and faithful journal of this expedition.

The kindest of husbands and fathers never portrayed himself with more unaffected truth than in this vain effort, if such he really fancied he was making, to sustain the character of "a cross old bachelor." The whole man, just as he was, breathes in every line, with all his compassionate and benevolent sympathy of heart, all his sharpness of observation and sober shrewdness of reflection ; all his enthusiasm for nature, for country life, for simple manners and simple pleasures, mixed up with an equally glowing enthusiasm, at which many may smile, for the tinies relics of feudal antiquity ; and last, not least, a pulse of physical rapture for the "circumstance of war," which bears witness to the blood of *Bolton* and *Fire the Brass*.

At Brussels, Scott found the small English garrison left there in com-

mand of Major-General Sir Frederick Adam, the son of his highly valued friend, the present Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court in Scotland. Sir Frederick had been wounded at Waterloo, and could not as yet mount on horseback; but one of his aides-de-camp, Captain Campbell, escorted Scott and his party to the field of battle, on which occasion they were also accompanied by another old acquaintance of his, Major Pryse Gordon, who being then on half-pay, happened to be domesticated with his family at Brussels.

"Paul" modestly acknowledges, in his last letter, the personal attentions which he received while in Paris, from Lords Cathcart, Aberdeen, and Castlereagh; and hints that, through their intervention, he had witnessed several of the splendid *fêtes* given by the Duke of Wellington, where he saw half the crowned heads of Europe grouped among the gallant soldiers who had cut a way for them to the guilty capital of France. Scott's reception, however, had been distinguished to a degree of which Paul's language gives no notion. The noble lords above named welcomed him with cordial satisfaction; and the Duke of Wellington, to whom he was first presented by Sir John Malcolm, treated him then and ever afterwards with a kindness and confidence which I have often heard him say he considered as "the highest distinction of his life." He used to tell, with great effect, the circumstances of his introduction to the Emperor Alexander at a dinner given by the Earl of Cathcart. Scott appeared on that occasion in the blue and red dress of the Selkirkshire Lieutenancy, and the Czar's first question, glancing at his lameness, was, "In what affair were you wounded?" Scott signified that he suffered from a natural infirmity; upon which the Emperor said, "I thought Lord Cathcart mentioned that you had served." Scott observed that the Earl looked a little embarrassed at this, and promptly answered, "Oh, yes; in a certain sense I have served—that is, in the yeomanry cavalry; a home force resembling the Landwehr or Landsturm." "Under what commander?" "Sous M. le Chevalier Rae." "Were you ever engaged?" "In some slight actions, such as the battle of the Cross Causeway, and the affair of Moredun Mill." "This," says Mr. Pringle of Whytbank, "was, as he saw in Lord Cathcart's face, quite sufficient, so he managed to turn the conversation to some other subject." It was at the same dinner that he first met Platoff,\* who seemed to take a great fancy to him, though, adds my friend, "I really don't think they had any common language to converse in." Next day, however, when Pringle and Scott were walking together in the Rue de la Paix, the Hetman happened to come up, cantering with some of his Cossacks; as soon as he saw Scott, he jumped off his horse, leaving it to the Pulk, and, running up to him, kissed him on each side of the cheek with extraordinary demonstrations of affection, and then made him understand through an aide-de-camp, that he

\* Scott acknowledges in a note to St. Ronan's Well (vol. i. p. 252) that he took from Platoff this portrait of Mr. Touchwood:—"His face, which at the distance of a yard or two seemed hale and smooth, appeared, when closely examined, to be seamed with a million of wrinkles, crossing each other in every direction possible, but as fine as if drawn by the point of a very fine needle." Thus did every little peculiarity remain treasured in his memory, to be used in due time for giving the air of minute reality to some imaginary personage.

wished him to join his staff at the next great review, when he would take care to mount him on the gentlest of his Ukraine horses. So, mounted accordingly, he witnessed the great closing spectacle on the Champ de Mars.

It will seem less surprising that Scott should have been honoured with much attention by the leading soldiers and statesmen of Germany then in Paris. The fame of his poetry had already been established for some years in that country. Yet it may be doubted whether Blücher had heard of Marmion any more than Platóff; and old Blücher struck Scott's fellow-travellers as taking more interest in him than any foreign general, except only the Hetman.

A striking passage in Paul's tenth letter indicates the high notion which Scott had formed of the personal qualities of the Prince of Orange. After depicting with almost prophetic accuracy the dangers to which the then recent union of Holland and Belgium must be exposed, he concludes with expressing his hope that the firmness and sagacity of the King of the Netherlands, and the admiration which his heir's character and bearing had already excited among all, even Belgian observers, might ultimately prove effective in redeeming this difficult experiment from the usual failure of "*arrondissements*, indemnities, and all the other terms of modern date under sanction of which cities and districts, and even kingdoms, have been passed from one Government to another, as the property of lands or stock is transferred by a bargain between private parties."

It is not less curious to compare, with the subsequent course of affairs in France, the following brief hint in Paul's sixteenth letter:—"The general rallying-point of the *Liberalistes* is an avowed dislike to the present monarch and his immediate connexions. They will sacrifice, they pretend, so much to the general inclinations of Europe, as to select a King from the Bourbon race; but he must be one of their own choosing, and the Duke of Orleans is most familiar in their mouths." Thus, in its very bud, had his eye detected the *conjuración de quince ans*!

Among the gay parties of this festive period, Scott mentioned with special pleasure one fine day given to an excursion to Ermenonville, under the auspices of Lady Castlereagh. The company was a large one, including most of the distinguished personages whom I have been naming, and they dined *al fresco* among the scenes of Rousseau's retirement.

At some stage of this merry day's proceedings, the ladies got tired of walking, and one of Lord Castlereagh's young diplomatists was dispatched into a village in quest of donkeys for their accommodation. The *attache* returned by-and-bye with a face of disappointment, complaining that the charge the people made was so extravagant, he could not think of yielding to the extortion. "*Marshal Forwards*" said nothing, but nodded to an aide-de-camp. They had passed a Prussian picket a little while before: three times the requisite number of donkeys appeared presently, driven before by a dozen hussars, who were followed by the screaming population of the refractory hamlet; and "an angry man was Blücher," said Scott, "when Lord Castlereagh condescended to go among them, all smiles, and sent them back with more Napoleons than perhaps the fee-simple of the whole stud was worth."

Another evening of more peaceful enjoyment has left a better record.

But I need not quote here the Lines on St. Cloud.\* They were sent, on the 16th of August, to the late Lady Alvanley, with whom and her daughters he spent much of his time while in Paris.

As yet the literary reputation of Scott had made but little way among the French nation; but some few of their eminent men vied even with the enthusiastic Germans in their courteous and unwearied attentions to him. The venerable *Chevalier*, in particular, seemed anxious to embrace every opportunity of acting as his *cicerone*; and many mornings were spent in exploring, under his guidance, the most remarkable scenes and objects of historical and antiquarian interest both in Paris and its neighbourhood. He several times also entertained Scott and his young companions at dinner; but the last of those dinners was thoroughly poisoned by a preliminary circumstance. The poet, on entering the saloon, was presented to a stranger, whose physiognomy struck him as the most hideous he had ever seen; nor was his disgust lessened when he found, a few minutes afterwards, that he had undergone the accolade of David "of the blood-stained brush."

From Paris, Mr. Bruce and Mr. Pringle went on to Switzerland, leaving the poet and Gala to return home together, which they did by way of Dieppe, Brighton, and London. It was here, on the 14th of September, that Scott had his last meeting with Lord Byron. He carried his young friend in the morning to call on Lord Byron, who agreed to dine with them at their hotel, where he met also Charles Matthews and Daniel Terry. The only survivor of the party has recorded it in his note-book as the most interesting day he ever spent. "How I did stare," he says, "at Byron's beautiful pale face, like a spirit's—good or evil. But he was *bitter*—what a contrast to Scott! Among other anecdotes of British prowess and spirit, Scott mentioned that a young gentleman ——— had been awfully shot in the head while conveying an order from the Duke, and yet staggered on, and delivered his message when at the point of death. 'Ha!' said Byron, 'I daresay he could do as well as most people without his head—it was never of much use to him.' Waterloo did not delight him, probably—and Scott could talk or think of scarcely anything else."

Matthews accompanied them as far as Warwick and Kenilworth, both of which castles the poet had seen before, but now re-examined with particular curiosity. They spent a night on this occasion at Birmingham; and early next morning Scott sallied forth to provide himself with a planter's knife of the most complex contrivance and finished workmanship. Having secured one to his mind, and which for many years after was his constant pocket-companion, he wrote his name on a card, "Walter Scott, Abbotsford," and directed it to be engraved on the handle. On his mentioning this acquisition at breakfast, young Gala expressed his desire to equip himself in like fashion, and was directed to the shop accordingly. When he had purchased a similar knife, and produced his name in turn for the engraver, the master cutler eyed the signature for a moment, and exclaimed, "John Scott of Gala! Well, I hope your ticket may serve me in as good stead as another Mr. Scott's has just done. Upon my word, one of my best men, an honest fellow from the north,

\* See Poetical Works.

went out of his senses when he saw it—he offered me a week's work if I would let him keep it to himself, and I took *Saunders* at his word." Scott used to talk of this as one of the most gratifying compliments he ever received in his literary capacity.

Their next halt was at Rokeby; but since Scott had heard from thence, Mrs. Morritt's illness had made such alarming progress, that the travellers regretted having obtruded themselves on the scene of affliction, and resumed their journey early next morning.

Reaching Abbotsford, Scott found with his family his old friend Mr. Skene of Rubislaw, who had expected him to come home sooner, and James Ballantyne, who had arrived with a copious budget of bills, calendars, booksellers' letters, and proof-sheets. From each of these visitors' *memoranda* I now extract an anecdote. Mr. Skene's is of a small enough matter, but still it places the man so completely before myself, that I am glad he thought it worth setting down. "During Scott's absence," says his friend, "his wife had had the tiny drawing-room of the cottage fitted up with new chintz furniture—everything had been set out in the best style—and she and her girls had been looking forward to the pleasure which they supposed the little surprise of the arrangements would give him. He was received in the spruce fresh room, set himself comfortably down in the chair prepared for him, and remained in the full enjoyment of his own fireside, and a return to his family circle, without the least consciousness that any change had taken place; until, at length, Mrs. Scott's patience could hold out no longer, and his attention was expressly called to it. The vexation he showed at having caused such a disappointment struck me as amiably characteristic—and in the course of the evening, he every now and then threw out some word of admiration, to reconsole *mamma*."

Ballantyne's note of their next morning's conference is in these terms. "He had just been reviewing a pageant of emperors and kings, which seemed, like another Field of the Cloth of Gold, to have been got up to realize before his eyes some of his own splendid descriptions. I begged him to tell me what was the general impression left on his mind. He answered that he might say he had seen and conversed with all classes of society, from the palace to the cottage, and including every conceivable shade of science and ignorance, but that he had never felt awed or abashed except in the presence of one man—the Duke of Wellington. I expressed some surprise. He said I ought not, for that the Duke of Wellington possessed every one mighty quality of the mind in a higher degree than any other man did, or had ever done. He said he beheld in him a great soldier and a great statesman—the greatest of each. When it was suggested that the Duke, on his part, saw before him a great poet and novelist, he smiled and said, 'What would the Duke of Wellington think of a few *bits of novels*, which perhaps he had never read, and for which the strong probability is that he would not care a sixpence if he had?' 'You are not' (adds Ballantyne) "to suppose that he looked either sheepish or embarrassed in the presence of the Duke—indeed, you well know that he did not, and could not do so; but the feeling, qualified and modified as I have described it, unquestionably did exist to a certain extent. Its origin forms a curious moral problem, and may probably be

traced to a secret consciousness which he might not himself advert to, that the Duke, however great as a soldier and statesman, was so defective in imagination as to be incapable of appreciating that which had formed the charm of his own life, as well as of his works."

It is proper to add to Mr. Ballantyne's solution of his "curious moral problem," that he was, in his latter days, a strenuous opponent of the Duke of Wellington's politics, to which circumstance he ascribes, in these same *memoranda*, the only coolness that ever occurred between him and Scott. I need hardly repeat what has been already distinctly stated more than once, that Scott never considered any amount of literary distinction as entitled to be spoken of in the same breath with mastery in the higher departments of practical life—least of all with the glory of a first-rate captain. To have done things worthy to be written was in his eyes a dignity to which no man made any approach, who had only written things worthy to be read. He on two occasions, which I can never forget, betrayed painful uneasiness when his works were alluded to as reflecting honour on the age that had produced Watt's improvement of the steam-engine, and the safety-lamp of Sir Humphry Davy. Such was his modest creed; but from all I ever saw or heard of his intercourse with the Duke of Wellington, I am not disposed to believe that he forsook it with the only man in whose presence he ever felt awe and abashment.\*

A charming page in Mr. Washington Irving's "Abbotsford and Newstead" affords us another anecdote connected with this return from Paris. Two years after this time, when the amiable American visited Scott, he walked with him to a quarry, where his people were at work. "The face of the humblest dependant," he says, "brightened at his approach—all paused from their labour, to have a pleasant 'crack wi' the laird.' Among the rest was a tall straight old fellow, with a healthful complexion and silver hairs, and a small round-crowned white hat. He had been about to shoulder a hod, but paused, and stood looking at Scott with a slight sparkling of his blue eye, as if waiting his turn; for the old fellow knew he was a favourite. Scott accosted him in an affable tone, and asked for a pinch of snuff. The old man drew forth a horn snuff-box. 'Hoot, man,' said Scott, 'not that old mull. Where's the bonnie French one that I brought you from Paris?' 'Troth, your Honour,' replied the old fellow, 'sic a mull as that is nae for week-days.' On leaving the quarry, Scott informed me that, when absent at Paris, he had purchased several trifling articles as presents for his dependants, and, among others, the gay snuff-box in question, which was so carefully reserved for Sundays by the veteran. 'It was not so much the value of the gifts,' said he, 'that pleased them, as the idea that the laird should think of them when so far away.'"

One more incident of this return—it was told to me by himself, some years afterwards, with gravity, and even sadness. "The last of my chargers," he said, "was a high-spirited and very handsome one, by name Daisy, all over white, without a speck, and with such a mane as Rubens delighted to paint. He had, among other good qualities, one always

\* I think it very probable that Scott had his own first interview with the Duke of Wellington in his mind when he described the introduction of Roland Graham to the Regent Murray in the novel of *The Abbot*.

particularly valuable in my case, that of standing like a rock to be mounted. When he was brought to the door, after I came home from the Continent, instead of signifying, by the usual tokens, that he was pleased to see his master, he looked askant at me like a devil; and when I put my foot in the stirrup, he reared bolt upright, and I fell to the ground rather awkwardly. The experiment was repeated twice or thrice, always with the same result. It occurred to me that he might have taken some capricious dislike to my dress; and Tom Purdie, who always falls heir to the white hat and green jacket, and so forth, when Mrs. Scott has made me discard a set of garments, was sent for, to try whether these habiliments would produce him a similar reception from his old friend Daisy; but Daisy allowed Tom to back him with all manner of gentleness. The thing was inexplicable—but he had certainly taken some part of my conduct in high dudgeon and disgust; and after trying him again, at the interval of a week, I was obliged to part with Daisy; and wars and rumours of wars being over, I resolved thenceforth to have done with such dainty blood. I now stick to a good sober cob." Somebody suggested that Daisy might have considered himself as ill-used by being left at home when *the laird* went on his journey. "Ay," said he, "these creatures have many thoughts of their own, no doubt, that we can never penetrate." Then, laughing, "Troth," said he, "maybe some bird had whispered Daisy that I had been to see the grand reviews at Paris on a little scrag of a Cossack, while my own gallant trooper was left behind bearing Peter and the post-bag to Melrose."

The poem of the "Field of Waterloo" was published before the end of October, the profits of the first edition being the author's contribution to the fund raised for the relief of the widows and children of the soldiers slain in the battle. This piece appears to have disappointed those most disposed to sympathize with the author's views and feelings. The descent is indeed heavy from his Bannockburn to his Waterloo: the presence, or all but visible reality, of what his dreams cherished, seems to have overawed his imagination, and tamed it into a weak pomposity of movement. The burst of pure native enthusiasm upon the *Scottish* heroes that fell around the Duke of Wellington's person, bears, however, the broadest marks of "the Mighty Minstrel."—

—"Saw gallant Miller's fading eye  
Still bent where Albyn's standards fly,  
And Cameron, in the shock of steel,  
Die like the offspring of Lochiel," &c.

The poem was the first upon a subject likely to be sufficiently hackneyed; and, having the advantage of coming out in a small cheap form—(prudently imitated from Murray's innovation with the tales of Byron, which was the death-blow to the system of verse in quarto)—it attained rapidly a measure of circulation above what had been reached either by *Robeby* or the *Lord of the Isles*.

Meanwhile the revision of Paul's Letters was proceeding; and Scott had almost immediately on his return to Abbotsford concluded his bargain for the first edition of a third novel, *The Antiquary*, to be published also in the approaching winter. Harold the Dauntless, too, was from time to time taken up as the amusement of *horæ subsecivæ*.

He had now completed a rather tedious negotiation with another bonnet-laird, and definitively added the lands of *Kasside* to the original estate of Abbotsford.

There is now to be mentioned a little pageant of December, 1815, which perhaps interested *Abbotsford* and *Kasside* not very much less than the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," as James Ballantyne calls it, of the preceding autumn. This was no other than a football match, got up under the auspices of the Duke of Buccleuch, between the men of the Vale of Yarrow and the burghers of Selkirk, the particulars of which will be sufficiently explained by an extract from Ballantyne's newspaper, written, I can have no doubt, by the Sheriff of the Forest.

#### "FOOTBALL MATCH.

"On Monday, 4th December, there was played, upon the extensive plain of Carterhaugh, near the junction of the Ettrick and Yarrow, the greatest match at the ball which has taken place for many years. It was held by the people of the Dale of Yarrow, against those of the parish of Selkirk; the former being brought to the field by the Right Hon. the Earl of Home, and the Gallant Sutors by their chief magistrate, Ebenezer Clarkson, Esq. Both sides were joined by many volunteers from other parishes; and the appearance of the various parties marching from their different glens to the place of rendezvous, with pipes playing and loud acclamations, carried back the coldest imagination to the old times when the Foresters assembled with the less peaceable purpose of invading the English territory, or defending their own. The romantic character of the scenery aided the illusion, as well as the performance of a feudal ceremony previous to commencing the games.

"His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry came upon the ground about 11 o'clock, attended by his sons, the young Earl of Dalkeith and Lord John Scott; the Countess of Home; the Ladies Ann, Charlotte, and Isabella Scott; Lord and Lady Montagu and family; the Hon. General Sir Edward Stopford, K.B.; Sir John Riddell of Riddell; Sir Alexander Don of Newton; Mr. Elliot Lockhart, Member for the county; Mr. Pringle of Whytbank, younger; Mr. Pringle of Torwoodlee; Captain Pringle, Royal Navy; Mr. Boyd of Broadmeadows and family; Mr. Chisholm of Chisholm; Major Pott of Todrig; Mr. Walter Scott, Sheriff of Selkirkshire, and family,—and many other gentlemen and ladies. The ancient banner of the Buccleuch family, a curious and venerable relique, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and with the word "*Bellendune*," the ancient war-cry of the clan of Scott, was then displayed, as on former occasions when the chief took the field in person, whether for the purpose of war or sport. The banner was delivered by Lady Ann Scott to Master Walter Scott, younger, of Abbotsford, who attended suitably mounted and armed, and, riding over the field, displayed it to the sound of the war-pipes, and amid the acclamations of the assembled spectators, who could not be fewer than 2,000 in number. That this singular renewal of an ancient military custom might not want poetical celebrity, verses were distributed among the spectators, composed for the occasion by Mr. Walter Scott and the Ettrick Shepherd. Mr. James Hogg acted as aide-de-camp to the Earl of Home in the command of the Yarrow men, and Mr. Robert Henderson of Selkirk to Mr. Clarkson, both of whom contributed not a little to the good order of the day."

The newspaper then gives the songs above alluded to—viz., Scott's "*Lifting of the Banner*," and that excellent ditty by Hogg, entitled "*The Ettrick Garland, to the Ancient Banner of the House of Buccleuch*."

I have no doubt the Sheriff of the Forest was a prouder man, when he saw his boy ride about Carterhaugh with the pennon of Bellenden, than when Platoff mounted himself for the imperial review of the Champ de Mars. It is a pity that I should have occasion to allude, before I quit a scene so characteristic of Scott, to another outbreak of Hogg's jealous

humour. His Autobiography informs us, that when the more distinguished part of the company assembled on the conclusion of the sport to dine at Bowhill, he was proceeding to place himself at a particular table, but the Sheriff seized his arm, told him *that* was reserved for the nobility, and seated him at an inferior board—"between himself and the Laird of Harden"—the first gentleman of the clan Scott. "The fact is," says Hogg, "I am convinced he was sore afraid of my getting to be too great a favourite among the young ladies of Buccleuch!" Who can read this, and not be reminded of Sancho Panza and the Duchess? And, after all, he quite mistook what Scott had said to him; for certainly there was, neither on this nor on any similar occasion at Bowhill, any *high table for the nobility*, though there was a *side-table for the children*, at which when the Shepherd of Ettrick was about to seat himself, his friend probably whispered that it was reserved for the "*little* lords and ladies, and their playmates." This blunder may seem undeserving of any explanation; but it is often in small matters that the strongest feelings are most strikingly betrayed; and this story is, in exact proportion to its silliness, indicative of the jealous feeling which mars and distorts so many of Hogg's representations of Scott's conduct and demeanour.

On the 26th, John Ballantyne, being then at Abbotsford, writes to Messrs. Constable:—"Paul is *all* in hand;" and an envelope, addressed to James Ballantyne on the 29th, has preserved another little fragment of Scott's playful doggerel:—

"Dear James—I'm done, thank God, with the long yarns  
Of the most prosy of Apostles—Paul;  
And now advance, sweet Heathen of Monkbarms,  
Step out, old quiz, as fast as I can scrawl."

## CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL'S LETTERS TO HIS KINSFOLK—GUY MANNERING "TERRY-FIED"—  
ANTIQUARY PUBLISHED—TALES OF MY LANDLORD—HAROLD THE  
DAUNTLESS—ROB ROY BEGUN.

THE year 1815 may be considered as, for Scott's peaceful tenour of life, an eventful one. That which followed has left almost its only traces in the successive appearance of nine volumes, which attest the prodigal genius and hardly less astonishing industry of the man. Early in January were published Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk, of which I need not now say more than that they were received with lively curiosity, and general though not vociferous applause. The first edition was an octavo, of 6,000 copies; and it was followed, in the course of the next two or three years, by a second and a third, amounting together to 3,000 more. The popularity of the novelist was at its height; and this admitted, if not avowed, specimen of Scott's prose, must have been perceived, by all who had any share of discrimination, to flow from the same pen.

Mr. Terry produced in the spring of 1816 a dramatic piece, entitled "Guy Mannering," which met with great success on the London boards, and still continues to be a favourite with the theatrical public; what share the novelist himself had in this first specimen of what he used to call "the art of *Terryfying*," I cannot exactly say; but his correspondence shows that the pretty song of the *Lullaby* was not his only contribution to it; and I infer that he had taken the trouble to modify the plot, and re-arrange, for stage purposes, a considerable part of the original dialogue. The casual risk of discovery, through the introduction of the song which had, in the meantime, been communicated to one of his humble dependants, the late Alexander Campbell, editor of Albyn's Anthology—(commonly known at Abbotsford as, by way of excellence, "*The Dunniewassail*")—and Scott's suggestions on that difficulty, will amuse the reader of the following letter:—

"I am afraid I am in a scrape about the song, and that of my own making, for as it never occurred to me that there was anything odd in my writing two or three verses for you, which have no connection with the novel, I was at no pains to disown them; and Campbell is just that sort of crazy creature with whom there is no confidence, not from want of honour and disposition to oblige, but from his flighty temper. The music of *Cadil gu lo* is already printed in his publication, and nothing can be done with him for fear of setting his tongue a-going. Erskine and you may consider whether you should barely acknowledge an obligation to an unknown friend, or pass the matter altogether in silence. In my opinion, my first idea was preferable to both, because I cannot see

what earthly connection there is between the song and the novel, or how acknowledging the one is fathering the other. On the contrary, it seems to me that acknowledgment tends to exclude the idea of further obligation than to the extent specified. I forgot also that I had given a copy of the lines to Mrs. Macleod of Macleod, from whom I had the air. But I remit the matter entirely to you and Erskine, for there must be many points in it which I cannot be supposed a good judge of. At any rate, don't let it delay your publication, and believe I shall be quite satisfied with what you think proper.

"I have got from my friend Glengarry the noblest dog ever seen on the Border since Johnnie Armstrong's time. He is between the wolf and deer greyhound, about six feet long from the tip of the nose to the tail, and high and strong in proportion; he is quite gentle, and a great favourite. Tell Will. Erskine he will eat off his plate without being at the trouble to put a paw on the table or chair.

"On consideration and comparing difficulties, I think I will settle with Campbell to take my name from the verses as they stand in his collection. The verses themselves I cannot take away without imprudent explanations, and as they go to other music, and stand without any name, they will probably not be noticed, so you need give yourself no further trouble on the score. I should like to see my copy: pray send it to the post-office under cover to Mr. Freeling, whose unlimited privilege is at my service on all occasions."

Early in May appeared the novel of the *Antiquary*, which seems to have been begun a little before the close of 1815. It came out at a moment of domestic distress.

Throughout the year 1815 Major John Scott had been drooping. He died on the 8th of May, 1816.

A few days afterwards, Scott handed to Mr. Thomas Scott a formal statement of pecuniary affairs; the result of which was, that the Major had left something not much under £6,000. Major Scott, from all I have heard, was a sober, sedate bachelor, of dull mind and frugal tastes, who, after his retirement from the army, divided his time between his mother's primitive fireside, and the society of a few whist-playing brother officers, that met for an evening rubber at Fortune's tavern. But, making every allowance for his retired and thrifty habits, I infer that the payments made to each of the three brothers out of their father's estate must have, prior to 1816, amounted to £5,000. From the letter conveying this statement (29th May), I extract a few sentences:—

"DEAR TOM,—

" . . . . Should the possession of this sum, and the certainty that you must, according to the course of nature, in a short space of years succeed to a similar sum of £3,000 belonging to our mother, induce you to turn your thoughts to Scotland, I shall be most happy to forward your views with any influence I may possess; and I have little doubt that, sooner or later, something may be done. But, unfortunately, every avenue is now choked with applicants, whose claims are very strong; for the number of disbanded officers, and public servants dismissed in consequence of Parliament turning restive and refusing the income-tax, is

great and increasing. Economy is the order of the day, and I assure you they are shaving properly close. It would, no doubt, be comparatively easy to get you a better situation where you are, but then it is bidding farewell to your country, at least for a long time, and separating your children from all knowledge of those with whom they are naturally connected. I shall anxiously expect to hear from you on your views and wishes. I think, at all events, you ought to get rid of the drudgery of the paymastership, but not without trying to exchange it for something else. I do not know how it is with you, but I do not feel myself quite so *young* as I was when we met last, and I should like well to see my only brother return to his own country and settle, without thoughts of leaving it till it is exchanged for one that is dark and distant. . . . I left all Jack's personal trifles at my mother's disposal. There was nothing of the slightest value, excepting his gold watch, which was my sister's, and a good one. My mother says he had wished my son Walter should have it, as his male representative—which I can only accept on condition *your* little Walter will accept a similar token of regard from his remaining uncle.—Yours affectionately,  
"W. S."

The letter in which Scott communicated his brother's death to Mr. Morritt gives us his own original opinion of *The Antiquary*.

"I sent you, some time since, *The Antiquary*. It is not so interesting as its predecessors—the period did not admit of so much romantic situation. But it has been more fortunate than any of them in the sale, for 6,000 went off in the first six days, and it is now at press again, which is very flattering to the unknown author. Another incognito proposes immediately to resume the second volume of *Triermain*, which is at present in the state of the Bear and Fiddle. Adieu, dear Morritt. Ever yours."

Speaking of his third novel in a letter of the same date to Terry, Scott says, "It wants the romance of *Waverley* and the adventure of *Guy Mannering*; and yet there is some salvation about it, for if a man will paint from nature, he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it."

After a little pause of hesitation, *The Antiquary* attained popularity not inferior to *Guy Mannering*; and though the author appears for a moment to have shared the doubts which he read in the countenance of James Ballantyne, it certainly was, in the sequel, his chief favourite among all his novels. Nor is it difficult to account for this preference, without laying any stress on the fact that, during a few short weeks, it was pretty commonly talked of as a falling off from its immediate predecessors, and that some minor critics re-echoed this stupid whisper in print. In that view there were many of its successors that had much stronger claims on the parental instinct of protection. But the truth is, that although Scott's Introduction of 1830 represents him as pleased with fancying that, in the principal personage, he had embalmed a worthy friend of his boyish days, his own antiquarian propensities, originating, perhaps, in the kind attentions of George Constable, of Wallace-Craigie, and fostered not a little, at about as ductile a period, by those of old Clerk of Eldin, and John Ramsay of Ochertyre, had by degrees so developed themselves that he could hardly, even when *The Antiquary*

was published, have scrupled about recognizing a quaint caricature of the founder of the Abbotsford Museum in the inimitable portraiture of the Laird of Monkbarns. The descriptive catalogue of that collection, which he began towards the close of his life, but alas! never finished, is entitled "*Reliquiæ Troticosianæ; or, the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq.*"

But laying this, which might have been little more than a good-humoured pleasantry, out of the question, there is assuredly no one of all his works on which more of his own early associations have left their image. Of those early associations, as his full-grown tastes were all the progeny, so his genius, in all its happiest efforts, was the "Recording Angel;" and when George Constable first expounded his "Gabions" to the child that was to immortalize his name, they were either wandering hand-in-hand over the field where the grass still grew rank upon the grave of *Balmanhapple*, or sauntering on the beach where the *Muckle-buckets* of Prestonpans dried their nets, singing,

"Weel may the boatie row, and better may she speed,  
O weel may the boatie row that wins the barns' bread"—

or telling wild stories about cliff escapes and the funerals of shipwrecked fishermen.

Considered by itself, without reference to these sources of personal interest, this novel seems to me to possess, almost throughout, in common with its two predecessors, a kind of simple unsought charm, which the subsequent works of the series hardly reached, save in occasional snatches:—like them it is, in all its humbler and softer scenes, the transcript of actual Scottish life, as observed by the man himself. And I think it must also be allowed that he has nowhere displayed his highest art, that of skilful contrast, in greater perfection. Even the tragic romance of *Waverley* does not set off its *Macwhееbles* and *Callum Begs* better than the oddities of Jonathan Oldbuck and his circle are relieved, on the one hand, by the stately gloom of the *Glenallans*, on the other, by the stern affliction of the poor fisherman, who, when discovered repairing the "auld black bitch o' a boat" in which his boy had been lost, and congratulated by his visitor on being capable of the exertion, makes answer, "And what would you have me to do, unless I wanted to see four children starve because one is drowned? *it's weel wi' you gentles, that can sit in the house wi' handkerchers at your een, when ye lose a friend; but the like o' us mairn to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as my hammer.*"

It may be worth noting, that it was in correcting the proof-sheets of this novel that Scott first took to equipping his chapters with mottoes of his own fabrication. On one occasion he happened to ask John Ballantyne, who was sitting by him, to hunt for a particular passage in *Beaumont and Fletcher*. John did as he was bid, but did not succeed in discovering the lines. "Hang it, Johnnie," cried Scott, "I believe I can make a motto sooner than you will find one." He did so accordingly; and from that hour, whenever memory failed to suggest an appropriate epigraph, he had recourse to the inexhaustible mines of "*old play*" or "*old ballad*," to which we owe some of the most exquisite verses that ever flowed from his pen.

Unlike, I believe, most men, whenever Scott neared the end of one composition, his spirits seem to have caught a new spring of buoyancy, and before the last sheet was sent from his desk, he had crowded his brain with the imagination of another fiction. The *Antiquary* was published, as we have seen, in May, but by the beginning of April he had already opened to the Ballantynes the plan of the first *Tales of my Landlord*; and—to say nothing of *Harold the Dauntless*, which he began shortly after the *Bridal of Triermain* was finished, and which he seems to have kept before him for two years as a congenial plaything, to be taken up whenever the coach brought no proof-sheets to jog him as to serious matters—he had also, before this time, undertaken to write the historical department of the *Register* for 1814. Mr. Southey had, for reasons upon which I do not enter, discontinued his services to that work; and it was now doubly necessary, after trying for one year a less eminent hand, that if the work were not to be dropped altogether, some strenuous exertion should be made to sustain its character. Scott had not yet collected the materials requisite for his historical sketch of a year distinguished for the importance and complexity of its events; but these, he doubted not, would soon reach him, and he felt no hesitation about pledging himself to complete, not only that sketch, but four new volumes of prose romances—and his *Harold the Dauntless* also, if Ballantyne could make any suitable arrangement on that score—between the April and the Christmas of 1816.

The *Antiquary* had been published by Constable, but I presume that, in addition to the usual stipulations, he had been again, on that occasion, solicited to relieve John Ballantyne and Co.'s stock to an extent which he did not find quite convenient; and at all events he had, though I know not on what grounds, shown a considerable reluctance of late to employ James Ballantyne and Co. as printers. One or other of these impediments is alluded to in a note of Scott's, which, though undated, has been pasted into John Ballantyne's private letter-book among the documents of the period in question. It is in these words:—

“DEAR JOHN,—

“I have seen the great swab, who is supple as a glove, and will do ALL, which some interpret NOTHING. However, we shall do well enough.

“W. S.”

Constable had been admitted, almost from the beginning, into the secret of the novels—and for that, among other reasons, it would have been desirable for the novelist to have him continue the publisher without interruption; but Scott was led to suspect, that if he were called upon to conclude a bargain for a fourth novel before the third had made its appearance, his scruples as to the matter of *printing* might at least protract the treaty; and why Scott should have been urgently desirous of seeing the transaction settled before the expiration of the half-yearly term of Whit Sunday is sufficiently explained by the fact, that while so much of the old unfortunate stock of John Ballantyne and Co. still remained on hand, and with it some occasional recurrence of commercial difficulty as to *floating bills* was to be expected, the sanguine author had gone on purchasing one patch of land after another, until his estate at Abbotsford

## PURCHASES OF LAND.

had already grown from 150 to nearly 1,000 acres. The property all about his original farm had been in the hands of various small holders (Scotticé, *cock-lairds*); these persons were sharp enough to understand, ere long, that their neighbour could with difficulty resist any temptation that might present itself in the shape of an offer of more acres; and thus he proceeded buying up lot after lot of unimproved ground at extravagant prices, his appetite increasing by what it fed on, while the ejected yeomen set themselves down elsewhere to fatten at their leisure upon the profits, most commonly the anticipated profits, of the Scotch novels.

He was ever and anon pulled up with a momentary misgiving, and resolved that the latest acquisition should be the last, until he could get rid entirely of John Ballantyne and Co.; but John Ballantyne was, from the utter lightness of his mind, his incapacity to look a day before him, and his eager impatience to enjoy the passing hour, the very last man in the world who could, under such circumstances, have been a serviceable agent. Moreover, John, too, had his professional ambition: he was naturally proud of his connection, however secondary, with the publication of these works, and this connection, though subordinate, was still very profitable; he must have suspected, that should his name disappear altogether from the list of booksellers, it would be a very difficult matter for him to retain any concern in them; and I cannot, on the whole, but consider it as certain, that, the first and more serious embarrassments being overcome, he was far from continuing to hold by his patron's anxiety for the ultimate and total abolition of their unhappy copartnership. He, at all events, unless when some sudden emergency arose, flattered Scott's own gay imagination, by uniformly representing everything in the most smiling colours; and though Scott, in his replies, seldom failed to introduce some passing hint of caution—such as "*Nullum numer. aest si sit prudentia*"—he more and more took home to himself the agreeable cast of his *Raglum's* anticipations, and wrote to him in a vein as merry as his own—e.g., "As for our stock

"'Twill be wearing awa', John,

Like snaw-wreaths when it's thaw, John," &c., &c., &c.

I am very sorry, in a word, to confess my conviction that John Ballantyne, however volatile and light-headed, acted at this period with cunning selfishness, both by Scott and by Constable. He well knew that it was to Constable alone that his firm had more than once owed its escape from utter ruin and dishonour; and he must also have known, that had a fair, straightforward effort been made for that purpose, after the triumphant career of the *Waverley* series had once commenced, nothing could have been more easy than to bring all the affairs of his "back stock, &c." to a complete close, by entering into a distinct and candid treaty on that subject, in connection with the future works of the great novelist, either with Constable or with any other first-rate house in the trade. But John, foreseeing that, were that unhappy concern, quite out of the field, he must himself subside into a mere subordinate member of his brother's printing company, seems to have parried the blow by the only arts of any consequence in which he ever was an adept. He appears to have systematically disguised from Scott the extent to which the whole

Ballantyne concern had been sustained by Constable—especially during his Hebridean tour of 1814, and his Continental one of 1815—and prompted and enforced the idea of trying other booksellers from time to time, instead of adhering to Constable, merely for the selfish purposes,—first, of facilitating the immediate discount of bills;—secondly, of further perplexing Scott's affairs, the entire disentanglement of which would have been, as he fancied, prejudicial to his own personal importance.

It was resolved, accordingly, to offer the risk and half profits of the first edition of another new novel—or rather collection of novels—not to Messrs. Constable, but to Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street, and Mr. Blackwood, who was then Murray's agent in Scotland; but it was at the same time resolved, partly because Scott wished to try another experiment on the public sagacity, but partly also, no question, from the wish to spare Constable's feelings, that the title-page of the *Tales of my Landlord* should not bear the magical words "by the Author of *Waverley*." The facility with which both Murray and Blackwood embraced such a proposal, as no untried novelist, being sane, could have dreamt of hazarding, shows that neither of them had any doubt as to the identity of the author. They both considered the withholding of the avowal on the forthcoming title-page as likely to check very much the first success of the book; but they were both eager to prevent Constable's acquiring a sort of prescriptive right to publish for the unrivalled novelist, and willing to disturb his tenure at this additional, and as they thought it, wholly unnecessary risk.

How sharply the unseen parent watched this first negotiation of his *Jedediah Cleishbotham* will appear from one of his letters:—

"DEAR JOHN,—

"James has made one or two important mistakes in the bargain with Murray and Blackwood. Briefly as follows:—

"1stly. Having only authority from me to promise 6,000 copies, he proposes they shall have the copyright *for ever*. I will see their noses cheese first.

"2ndly. He proposes I shall have twelve months' bills—I have always got six. However, I would not stand on that.

"3rdly. He talks of volumes being put into the publishers' hands to consider and decide on. No such thing; a bare perusal at St. John Street\* only.

"Then for omissions. It is NOT stipulated that we supply the paper and print of successive editions. This must be nailed, and not left to understanding.—Secondly, I will have London bills as well as Blackwood's.

"If they agree to these conditions, good and well. If they demur, Constable must be instantly tried, giving half to the Longmans, and *we* drawing on *them* for that moiety, or Constable lodging *their* bill in *our* hands. You will understand it as a four volume touch—a work totally different in style and structure from the others—a new cast, in short, of the net which has hitherto made miraculous draughts. I do not limit

\* James Ballantyne's dwelling-house was in this street, adjoining the Canongate of Edinburgh.

you to terms, because I think you will make them better than I can do. But he must do more than others, since he will not or cannot print with us. For every point but that I would rather deal with Constable than any one; he has always shown himself spirited, judicious, and liberal. Blackwood must be brought to the point *instantly*, and, *whenever* he demurs, Constable must be treated with, for there is no use in suffering the thing to be blown on. At the same time, you need not conceal from him that there were some proposals elsewhere, but you may add, with truth, I would rather close with him.

"P.S.—I think Constable should jump at this affair, for I believe the work will be very popular."

Messrs. Murray and Blackwood agreed to all the author's conditions here expressed. They also relieved John Ballantyne and Co. of stock to the value of £500; and at least Mr. Murray must, moreover, have subsequently consented to anticipate the period of his payments. At all events, I find, in a letter of Scott's dated in the subsequent August, this new echo of the old advice:—

"DEAR JOHN,—

"I have the pleasure to enclose Murray's acceptances. I earnestly recommend to you to push realizing as much as you can.

"Consider weel, gude man,  
We hae but borrowed gear;  
The horse that I ride on  
It is John Murray's mear.

"Yours truly, W. Scott."

I know not how much of the tale of the Black Dwarf had been seen by Blackwood, in St. John Street, before he concluded this bargain for himself and his friend Murray; but when the closing sheets of that novel reached him, he considered them as by no means sustaining the delightful promise of the opening ones. He was a man of strong talents, and, though without anything that could be called learning, of very respectable information, greatly superior to what has, in this age, been common in his profession; acute, earnest, eminently zealous in whatever he put his hand to; upright, honest, sincere, and courageous. But as Constable owed his first introduction to the upper world of literature and of society in general to his Edinburgh Review, so did Blackwood his to the magazine which has now made his name familiar to the world—and at the period of which I write that miscellany was unborn; he was known only as a diligent antiquarian bookseller of the old town of Edinburgh, and the Scotch agent of the great London publisher, Murray. The abilities, in short, which he lived to develop, were as yet unsuspected—unless, perhaps, among a small circle; and the knowledge of the world, which so few men gather from anything but painful collision with various conflicting orders of their fellow-men, was not his. He was to the last plain and blunt; at this time I can easily believe him to have been so to a degree which Scott might look upon as "ungracious"—I take the epithet from one of his letters to James Ballantyne. Mr. Blackwood, therefore, upon reading what seemed to him the lame and impotent conclusion of a well-begun story, did not search about for any glossy periphrase, but

at once wrote to beg that James Ballantyne would inform the unknown author that such was his opinion. This might possibly have been endured; but Blackwood, feeling, I have no doubt, a genuine enthusiasm for the author's fame, as well as a just tradesman's anxiety as to his own adventure, proceeded to suggest the outline of what would, in his judgment, be a better upwinding of the plot of the Black Dwarf, and concluded his epistle, which he desired to be forwarded to the nameless novelist, with announcing his willingness, in case the proposed alteration were agreed to, that the whole expense of cancelling and reprinting a certain number of sheets should be charged to his own personal account with "James Ballantyne and Co." His letter appears to have further indicated that he had taken counsel with some literary person, on whose taste he placed great reliance, and who, if he had not originated, at least approved of the proposed process of recasting. Had Scott never possessed any such system of inter-agency as the Ballantynes supplied, he would, among other and perhaps greater inconveniences, have escaped that of the want of personal familiarity with several persons, with whose confidence—and why should I not add, with the innocent gratification of whose little vanities?—his own pecuniary interests were often deeply connected. A very little personal contact would have introduced such a character as Blackwood's to the respect, nay, to the affectionate respect, of Scott, who, above all others, was ready to sympathize cordially with honest and able men, in whatever condition of life he discovered them. He did both know and appreciate Blackwood better in after times; but in 1816, when this plain-spoken communication reached him, the name was little more than a name; and his answer to the most solemn of go-betweenes was in these terms, which I sincerely wish I could tell how Signior Aldiborontiphoscophornio translated into any dialect submissible to Blackwood's apprehension:—

"DEAR JAMES,—

"I have received Blackwood's impudent letter. Tell him and his coadjutor that I belong to the Black Hussars of literature, who neither give nor receive criticism. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that ever was made. . "W. S."

This, and a few other documents referring to the same business, did not come into my hands until both Ballantyne and Blackwood were no more; and it is not surprising that Mr. Murray's recollection, if (which I much doubt) he had been at all consulted about it, should not, at this distance of time, preserve any traces of its details. "I remember nothing," he writes to me, "but that one of the very proudest days of my life was that on which I published the first Tales of my Landlord; and a vague notion that I owed the dropping of my connection with the Great Novo list to some trashy disputes between Blackwood and the Ballantynes."

While these volumes were in progress, Scott found time to make an excursion into Perthshire and Dumbartonshire for the sake of showing the scenery, made famous in the Lady of the Lake and Waverley, to his wife's old friends, Miss Dumergue and Miss Sarah Nicolson, who had never before been in Scotland.

In October, 1816, appeared the Edinburgh Annual Register, containing

Scott's historical sketch of the year 1814—a composition which would occupy two volumes octavo. Though executed with extraordinary rapidity, the sketch is as clear as spirited; but I need say no more of it here, as the author travels mostly over the same ground again in his *Life of Napoleon*.

Scott's correspondence proves that during this autumn he had received many English guests. I regret to add it also proves that he had continued all the while to be annoyed with calls for money from John Ballantyne; yet before the 12th of November called him to Edinburgh, he appears to have nearly finished the first *Tales of my Landlord*. He had, moreover, concluded a negotiation with Constable and Longman for a series of Letters on the History of Scotland, of which, however, if he ever wrote any part, the MS. has not been discovered. It is probable that he may have worked some detached fragments into his long subsequent *Tales of a Grandfather*. He was now busy with plans of building at Abbotsford, and deep in consultation on that subject with an artist eminent for his skill in Gothic architecture, Mr. Edward Blore, R.A.

On the 1st of December the first series of the *Tales of my Landlord* appeared, and notwithstanding the silence of the title-page, and the change of publishers, and the attempt which had certainly been made to vary the style both of delineation and of language, all doubts whether they were or were not from the same hand with *Waverley* had worn themselves out before the lapse of a week. The enthusiasm of their reception among the highest literary circles of London may be gathered from the following letter:—

“Albemarle Street, 14th December, 1816.

“DEAR SIR,—

“Although I dare not address you as the author of certain ‘*Tales*’ (which, however, must be written either by Walter Scott or the Devil), yet nothing can restrain me from thinking it is to your influence with the author that I am indebted for the essential honour of being one of their publishers, and I must intrude upon you to offer my most hearty thanks—not divided, but doubled—alike for my worldly gain therein, and for the great acquisition of professional reputation which their publication has already procured me. I believe I might, under any oath that could be proposed, swear that I never experienced such unmixed pleasure as the reading of this exquisite work has afforded me; and if you could see me, as the author's literary chamberlain, receiving the unanimous and vehement praises of every one who has read it, and the curses of those whose needs my scanty supply could not satisfy, you might judge of the sincerity with which I now entreat you to assure him of the most complete success. Lord Holland said, when I asked his opinion—‘Opinion! We did not one of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout.’ Frere, Hallam, Boswell,\* Lord Glenbervie, William Lamb,† all agree that it surpasses all the other novels. Gifford's estimate is increased at every reperusal. Heber says there are only two men in the world—Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Between you you have given existence to a  
THIRD. Ever your faithful servant,  
“JOHN MURRAY.”

\* The late James Boswell, Esq., of the Temple—second son of *Bosny*.

† The Honourable William Lamb—afterward Lord Melbourne.

To this cordial effusion Scott returned the following answer. It was necessary, since he had fairly resolved against compromising his incognito, that he should be prepared not only to repel the impertinent curiosity of strangers, but to evade the proffered congratulations of overflowing kindness. He contrived, however, to do so, on this and all similar occasions, in a style of equivoque which could never be seriously misunderstood:—

“Edinburgh, 18th December, 1816.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“I give you heartily joy of the success of the *Tales*, although I do not claim that paternal interest in them which my friends do me the credit to assign me. I assure you I have never read a volume of them until they were printed, and can only join with the rest of the world in applauding the true and striking portraits which they present of old Scottish manners. I do not expect implicit reliance to be placed on my disavowal, because I know very well that he who is disposed not to own a work must necessarily deny it, and that otherwise his secret would be at the mercy of all who choose to ask the question, since silence in such a case must always pass for consent, or rather assent. But I have a mode of convincing you that I am perfectly serious in my denial—pretty similar to that by which Solomon distinguished the fictitious from the real mother—and that is, by reviewing the work, which I take to be an operation equal to that of quartering the child. But this is only on condition I can have Mr. Erskine’s assistance, who admires the work greatly more than I do, though I think the painting of the second tale both true and powerful. I knew *Old Mortality* very well; his name was Paterson, but few knew him otherwise than by his nickname. The first tale is not very original in its concoction, and lame and impotent in its conclusion. My love to Gifford. I have been over head and ears in work this summer, or I would have sent the Gipsies; indeed, I was partly stopped by finding it impossible to procure a few words of their language.

“Constable wrote to me about two months since, desirous of having a new edition of *Paul*; but not hearing from you, I conclude you are still on hand. Longman’s people had then only sixty copies.

“Kind compliments to Heber, whom I expected at Abbotsford this summer; also to Mr. Croker and all your four-o’clock visitors. I am just going to Abbotsford to make a small addition to my premises there. I have now about 700 acres, thanks to the booksellers and the discerning public. Yours truly,

“WALTER SCOTT.

“P.S.—I have much to ask about *Lord Byron*, if I had time. The third canto of the *Childe* is inimitable. Of the last poems, there are one or two which indicate rather an irregular play of imagination.\* What a pity that a man of such exquisite genius will not be contented to be happy on the ordinary terms! I declare my heart bleeds when I think of him, self-banished from the country to which he is an honour.”

Mr. Murray, gladly embracing this offer of an article for his journal on the *Tales* of my Landlord, begged Scott to take a wider scope, and, drop-

\* *Parisina*, *The Dream*, and the “*Domestic Pieces*” had been recently published.

ping all respect for the idea of a divided parentage, to place together any materials he might have for the illustration of the Waverley Novels in general; he suggested, in particular, that instead of drawing up a long-promised disquisition on the Gipsies in a separate shape, whatever he had to say concerning that picturesque generation might be introduced by way of comment on the character of *Meg Merrilees*. What Scott's original conception had been I know not; he certainly gave his review all the breadth which Murray could have wished, and, *inter alia*, diversified it with a few anecdotes of the Scottish gipsies. But the late excellent biographer of John Knox, Dr. Thomas M'Crie, had in the meantime considered the representation of the Covenanters in the story of Old Mortality so unfair as to demand at his hands a very serious rebuke. The Doctor forthwith published, in a magazine called the Edinburgh Christian Instructor, a set of papers, in which the historical foundations of that tale were attacked with indignant warmth; and though Scott, when he first heard of these invectives, expressed his resolution never even to read them, he found the impression they were producing so strong that he soon changed his purpose, and finally devoted a very large part of his article for the Quarterly Review to an elaborate defence of his own picture of the Covenanters.\*

Before the first Tales of my Landlord were six weeks old, two editions of 2,000 copies disappeared, and a third of 2,000 was put to press; but notwithstanding this rapid success, which was still further continued, and the friendly relations which always subsisted between the author and Mr. Murray, circumstances ere long occurred which carried the publication of the work into the hands of Messrs. Constable.

The author's answer to Dr. M'Crie, and his Introduction of 1830, has exhausted the historical materials on which he constructed his Old Mor-

\* Since I have mentioned this review, I may as well, to avoid recurrence to it, express here my conviction that Erskine, not Scott, was the author of the critical estimate of the Waverley Novels which it embraces,—although for the purpose of mystification Scott had taken the trouble to transcribe the paragraphs in which that estimate is contained. At the same time I cannot but add that, had Scott really been the sole author of this review, he need not have incurred the severe censure which has been applied to his supposed conduct in the matter. After all, his judgment of his own works must have been allowed to be not above, but very far under, the mark; and the whole affair would, I think, have been considered by every candid person exactly as the letter about Solomon and the rival mothers was by Murray, Gifford, and “the four-o'clock visitors” of Albemarle Street—as a good joke. A better joke certainly than the allusion to the report of Thomas Scott being the real author of Waverley, at the close of the article, was never penned; and I think it includes a confession over which a misanthrope might have chuckled.—“We intended here to conclude this long article, when a strong report reached us of certain Transatlantic confessions, which, if genuine (though of this we know nothing), assign a different author to these volumes than the party suspected by our Scottish correspondents. Yet a critic may be excused seizing upon the nearest suspicious person, on the principle happily expressed by Claverhouse, in a letter to the Earl of Linlithgow. He had been, it seems, in search of a gifted weaver, who used to hold forth at conventicles: ‘I sent for the webster (weaver), they brought in his brother for him: though he, maybe, cannot preach like his brother, I doubt not but he is as well-principled as he, wherefore I thought it would be no great fault to give him the trouble to go to jail with the rest!’”—*Miscellaneous Prose Works*. vol. xix. pp. 85-6.

talities; and the origin of the Black Dwarf, as to the conclusion of which story he appears on reflection to have completely adopted the opinion of honest Blackwood, has already been sufficiently illustrated. The latter tale, however imperfect, and unworthy as a work of art to be placed high in the catalogue of his productions, derives a singular interest from its delineation of the dark feelings so often connected with physical deformity,—feelings which appear to have diffused their shadow over the whole genius of Byron, and which, but for this single picture, we should hardly have conceived ever to have passed through Scott's happier mind. All the bitter blasphemy of spirit which, from infancy to the tomb, swelled up in Byron against the unkindness of nature—which sometimes perverted even his filial love into a sentiment of diabolical malignity—all this black and desolate train of reflections must have been encountered and deliberately subdued by the manly parent of the Black Dwarf. Old Mortality, on the other hand, is remarkable as the novelist's first attempt to re-people the past by the power of imagination working on materials furnished by books. In *Waverley* he revived the fervid dreams of his boyhood, and drew, not from printed records, but from the artless oral narratives of his *Invernahyles*. In *Guy Mannering* he embodied characters and manners familiar to his own wandering youth. But whenever his letters mention Old Mortality in its progress, they represent him as strong in the confidence that the industry with which he had pored over a library of forgotten tracts would enable him to identify himself with the time in which they had birth, as completely as if he had listened with his own ears to the dismal sermons of Pedin, ridden with Claverhouse and Dalzell in the rout of Bothwell, and been an advocate at the bar of the Privy-Council when Lauderdale catechized and tortured the assassins of Archbishop Sharp. To reproduce a departed age with such minute and lifelike accuracy as this tale exhibits demanded a far more energetic sympathy of imagination than had been called for in any efforts of his serious verse. It is indeed most curiously instructive for any student of art, to compare the Roundheads of Rokeby with the Bluebonnets of Old Mortality. For the rest—the story is framed with a deeper skill than any of the preceding novels; the canvas is a broader one; the characters are contrasted and projected with a power and felicity which neither he nor any other master ever surpassed; and, notwithstanding all that has been urged against him as a disparager of the Covenanters, it is to me very doubtful whether the inspiration of romantic chivalry ever prompted him to nobler emotions than he has lavished on the reanimation of their stern and solemn enthusiasm. This work has always appeared to me the Marmion of his novels.

I have disclaimed the power of further illustrating its historical ground-works, but I am enabled by Mr. Train's kindness to give some interesting additions to Scott's own account of this novel as a composition. The generous supervisor visited him in Edinburgh in May, 1816, a few days after the publication of *The Antiquary*, carrying with him several relics which he wished to present to his collection, among others a purse that had belonged to Rob Roy; and also a fresh heap of traditionary gleanings, which he had gathered among the tale-tellers of his district. One of these last was in the shape of a letter to Mr. Train from a Mr. Broadfoot,

"schoolmaster at the clachan of Penningham, and author of the celebrated song of the Hills of Galloway," with which I confess myself unacquainted. Broadfoot had facetiously signed his communication, *Clashbottom*; "a professional appellation, derived," says Mr. Train, "from the use of the birch, and by which he was usually addressed among his companions,—who assembled, not at the Wallace Inn of Gandercleuch, but at the sign of the Shoulder of Mutton in Newton Stewart." Scott received these gifts with benignity, and invited the friendly donor to breakfast next morning. He found him at work in his library, and surveyed with enthusiastic curiosity the furniture of the room, especially its only picture, a portrait of Graham of Claverhouse. Train expressed the surprise with which every one who had known Dundee only in the pages of the Presbyterian annalists must see for the first time that beautiful and melancholy visage, worthy of the most pathetic dreams of romance. Scott replied, "that no character had been so foully traduced as the Viscount of Dundee; that, thanks to Wodrow, Cruikshanks, and such chroniclers, he, who was every inch a soldier and a gentleman, still passed among the Scottish vulgar for a ruffian desperado, who rode a goblin horse, was proof against shot, and in league with the devil." "Might he not," said Mr. Train, "be made, in good hands, the hero of a national romance as interesting as any about either Wallace or Prince Charlie?" "He might," said Scott; "but your western zealots would require to be faithfully portrayed in order to bring him out with the right effect." "And what," resumed Train, "if the story were to be delivered as if from the mouth of *Old Mortality*? Would he not do as well as the *Minstrel* did in the Lay?" "Old Mortality!" said Scott; "who was he?" Mr. Train then told what he could remember of old Paterson, and seeing how much his story interested the hearer, offered to inquire further about that enthusiast on his return to Galloway. "Do so by all means," said Scott; "I assure you I shall look with anxiety for your communication." He said nothing at this time of his own meeting with Old Mortality in the churchyard of Dunnotar, and I think there can be no doubt that that meeting was thus recalled to his recollection, or that to this intercourse with Mr. Train we owe the whole machinery of the Tales of my Landlord, as well as the adoption of Claverhouse's period for the scene of one of its first fictions. I think it highly probable that we owe a further obligation to the worthy supervisor's presentation of Rob Roy's *spleuchan*.

The original design for the First Series of Jedediah Cleishbotham was, as Scott told me, to include four separate tales illustrative of four districts of the country, in the like number of volumes; but, his imagination once kindled upon any theme, he could not but pour himself out freely—so that notion was soon abandoned.

Within less than a month, the Black Dwarf and Old Mortality were followed by "Harold the Dauntless, by the Author of the Bridal of Triermain." This poem had been, it appears, begun several years back; nay, part of it had been actually printed before the appearance of Childe Harold, though that circumstance had escaped the author's remembrance when he penned, in 1830, his Introduction to the Lord of the Isles; for he there says, "I am still astonished at my having committed the gross error of selecting the very name which Lord Byron had made so famous."

The volume was published by Messrs. Constable, and had, in those book-sellers' phrase, "considerable success." It has never, however, been placed on a level with *Triermain*; and though it contains many vigorous pictures and splendid verses, and here and there some happy humour, the confusion and harsh transitions of the fable, and the dim rudeness of character and manners, seem sufficient to account for this inferiority in public favour. It is not surprising that the author should have redoubled his aversion to the notion of any more serious performance in verse. He had seized on an instrument of wider compass, and which, handled with whatever rapidity, seemed to reveal at every touch treasures that had hitherto slept unconsciously within him. He had thrown off his fetters, and might well go forth rejoicing in the native elasticity of his strength.

It is at least a curious coincidence in literary history that, as Cervantes, driven from the stage of Madrid by the success of Lope de Vega, threw himself into prose romance, and produced, at the moment when the world considered him as silenced for ever, the *Don Quixote* which has outlived Lope's two thousand triumphant dramas—so Scott, abandoning verse to Byron, should have rebounded from his fall by the only prose romances which seem to be classed with the masterpiece of Spanish genius by the general judgment of Europe.

I shall insert a letter, in which he announces the publication of *Harold the Dauntless*. In it he also mentions the light and humorous little piece entitled the *Sultan of Serendib*, or the *Search after Happiness*, originally published in a weekly paper, after the fashion of the old essayists, which about this time issued from John Ballantyne's premises, under the appropriate name of the "*SALE-ROOM*." The paper had slender success; and though Scott wrote several things for it, none of them, except this metrical essay, attracted any notice. The *Sale-Room* was, in fact, a dull and hopeless concern, and I should scarcely have thought it worth mentioning but for the confirmation it lends to my suspicion that Mr. John Ballantyne was very unwilling, after all his warnings, to retire completely from the field of publishing.

To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., M.P., *Rokeby Park*.

"Edinburgh, Jan. 30, 1817.

"MY DEAR MORRITT,—

"I hope to send you in a couple of days *Harold the Dauntless*, which has not turned out so good as I thought it would have done. I begin to get too old and stupid, I think, for poetry, and will certainly never again adventure on a grand scale. For amusement, and to help a little publication that is going on here, I have spun a doggerel tale called the *Search after Happiness*, of which I shall send a copy by post, if it is of a frankable size; if not, I can put it up with the *Dauntless*. Among other misfortunes of *Harold* is his name, but the thing was partly printed before *Childe Harold* was in question.

"My great and good news at present is that the bog (that perpetual hobbyhorse) has produced a commodity of most excellent marl, and promises to be of the very last consequence to my wild ground in the neighbourhood; for nothing can equal the effect of marl as a top-dressing. Methinks (in my mind's eye, Horatio) I see all the blue-bank,

the hinny-lee, and the other provinces of my poor kingdom, waving with deep rye-grass and clover, like the meadows at Rokeby. In honest truth, it will do me yeoman's service.

"My next good tidings are that Jedediah carries the world before him. Six thousand have been disposed of, and three thousand more are pressing onward, which will be worth £2,500 to the worthy pedagogue of Ganderclench. Some of the Scotch Whigs, of the right old fanatical leaven, have waxed wroth with Jedediah—

" 'But shall we go mourn for that, my dear?  
The cold moon shines by night,  
And when we wander here and there,  
We then do go most right.'

"After all, these honest gentlemen are like Queen Elizabeth in their ideas of portrait-painting. They require the pictures of their predecessors to be likenesses, and at the same time demand that they shall be painted without shade, being probably of opinion, with the virgin majesty of England, that there is no such thing in nature.

"I presume you will be going almost immediately to London—at least all our Scotch Members are requested to be at their posts, the meaning of which I cannot pretend to guess. The finances are the only ticklish matter; but there is, after all, plenty of money in the country, now that our fever-fit is a little over. In Britain, when there is the least damp upon the spirits of the public, they are exactly like people in a crowd, who take the alarm, and shoulder each other to and fro till some dozen or two of the weakest are borne down and trodden to death; whereas, if they would but have patience and remain quiet, there would be a safe and speedy end to their embarrassment. How we want Billie Pitt now to get up and give the tone to our feelings and opinions!

"As I take up this letter to finish the same, I hear the Prince Regent has been attacked and fired at. Since he was not hurt (for I should be sincerely sorry for my fat friend), I see nothing but good luck to result from this assault. It will make him a good manageable boy, and, I think, secure you a quiet session of Parliament. Adieu, my dear Morritt, God bless you. Let me know if the gimcracks come safe—I mean the book, &c. Ever yours,  
"WALTER SCOTT."

Not to disturb the narrative of his literary proceedings, I have deferred until now the mention of an attempt which Scott made during the winter of 1816-1817 to exchange his seat at the Clerks' table for one on the bench of the Scotch Court of Exchequer. It had often occurred to me, in the most prosperous years of his life, that such a situation would have suited him better in every respect than that which he held, and that his never attaining a promotion, which the Scottish public would have considered so naturally due to his character and services, reflected little honour on his political allies. But at the period when I was entitled to hint this to him, he appeared to have made up his mind that the rank of Clerk of Session was more compatible than that of a Supreme Judge with the habits of a literary man, who was perpetually publishing, and whose writings were generally of the imaginative order. I had also witnessed the zeal with which he seconded the views of more than one

of his own friends, when their ambition was directed to the Exchequer bench. I remained, in short, ignorant that he ever had seriously thought of it for himself, until the ruin of his worldly fortunes in 1826; nor had I any information that his wish to obtain it had ever been distinctly stated, until certain letters were placed in my hands after his death, by the present Duke of Buccleuch. The late Duke's answers to these letters are also before me; but of them it is sufficient to say, that, while they show the warmest anxiety to serve Scott, they refer to private matters, which ultimately rendered it inconsistent with his Grace's feelings to interfere at the time in question with the distribution of Crown patronage. I incline to think, on the whole, that the death of this nobleman, which soon after left the influence of his house in abeyance, must have, far more than any other circumstance, determined Scott to renounce all notions of altering his professional position.

While the abortive negotiation as to the Exchequer was still pending, Scott was visited, for the first time since his childish years, with a painful illness, which proved the harbinger of a series of attacks, all nearly of the same kind, continued at short intervals during more than two years. Various letters, already introduced, have indicated how idly his habits of life when in Edinburgh differed from those of Abbotsford. They at all times did so to a great extent; but he had pushed his liberties with a most robust constitution to a perilous extreme while the affairs of the Ballantynes were labouring, and he was now to pay the penalty.

The first serious alarm occurred towards the close of a merry dinner party in Castle Street (on the 5th of March), when Scott suddenly sustained such exquisite torture from cramp in the stomach, that his masculine powers of endurance gave way, and he retired from the room with a scream of agony which electrified his guests. This scene was often repeated, as we shall see presently. His friends in Edinburgh continued all that spring in great anxiety on his account. Scarcely, however, had the first symptoms yielded to severe medical treatment, than he is found to have beguiled the intervals of his suffering by planning a dramatic piece on a story supplied to him by one of Train's communications, which he desired to present to Terry on behalf of the actor's first-born son, who had been christened by the name of Walter Scott Terry. Such was the origin of the *Fortunes of Devorgoil*—a piece which, though completed soon afterwards, and submitted by Terry to many manipulations with a view to the stage, was never received by any manager, and was first published, towards the close of the author's life, under the title, slightly altered for an obvious reason, of the *Doom of Devorgoil*. The sketch of the story which he gives in the following letter will probably be considered by many besides myself as well worth the drama. It appears that the actor had mentioned to Scott his intention of *Terryfying* the *Black Dwarf*.

' DEAR TERRY,—

"I am now able to write to you on your own affairs, though still weak as water from the operations of the medical faculty, who, I think, treated me as a recusant to their authority, and having me once at advantage, were determined I should not have strength to rebel again in

a hurry. After all, I believe it was touch and go; and considering how much I have to do for my own family and others, my elegy might have been that of the Auld Man's Mare—

“The peats and turf are all to lead,  
What aild the beast to die?”

“You don't mention the nature of your undertaking in your last, and in your former you spoke both of the Black Dwarf and of Triermain. I have some doubts whether the town will endure a second time the following up a well-known tale with a dramatic representation—and there is no *vis comica* to redeem the Black Dwarf, as in the case of Dominie Sampson. I have thought of two subjects for you, if, like the archbishop's homilies, they do not smell of the apoplexy. The first is a noble and very dramatic tradition preserved in Galloway, which runs briefly thus:—The Barons of Plenton (the family name, I think, was——by Jupiter, forgot!) boasted of great antiquity, and formerly of extensive power and wealth, to which the ruins of their huge castle, situated on an inland loch, still bear witness. In the middle of the seventeenth century, it is said, these ruins were still inhabited by the lineal descendant of this powerful family. But the ruinous halls and towers of his ancestors were all that had descended to him, and he cultivated the garden of the castle, and sold its fruits for a subsistence. He married in a line suitable rather to his present situation than the dignity of his descent, and was quite sunk into the rank of peasantry, excepting that he was still called—more in mockery, or at least in familiarity, than in respect—the Baron of Plenton. A causeway connected the castle with the mainland; it was cut in the middle, and the moat only passable by a drawbridge which yet subsisted, and which the poor old couple contrived to raise every night by their joint efforts, the country being very unsettled at the time. It must be observed, that the old man and his wife occupied only one apartment in the extensive ruins, a small one adjoining to the drawbridge; the rest was waste and dilapidated. As they were about to retire one night to rest, they were deterred by a sudden storm, which, rising in the wildest manner possible, threatened to bury them under the ruins of the castle. While they listened in terror to the complicated sounds of thunder, wind, and rain, they were astonished to hear the clang of hoofs on the causeway, and the voices of people clamouring for admittance. This was a request not rashly to be granted. The couple looked out, and dimly discerned through the storm that the causeway was crowded with riders. ‘How many of you are there?’ demanded John. ‘Not more than the hall will hold,’ was the answer; ‘but open the gate, lower the bridge, and do not keep the ladies in the rain.’ John's heart was melted for the ladies, and, against his wife's advice, he undid the bolts, sunk the drawbridge, and bade them enter in the name of God. Having done so, he instantly retired into his *sanctum sanctorum* to await the event, for there was something in the voices and language of his guests that sounded mysterious and awful. They rushed into the castle, and appeared to know their way through all its recesses. Grooms were heard hurrying their horses to the stables—sentinels were heard mounting guard—a thousand lights gleamed from place to place through the ruins, till at length they seemed all

concentrated in the baronial hall, whose range of broad windows threw a resplendent illumination on the moss-grown court below. After a short time, a domestic, clad in a rich but very antique dress, appeared before the old couple, and commanded them to attend his lord and lady in the great hall. They went with tottering steps, and to their great terror found themselves in the midst of a most brilliant and joyous company; but the fearful part of it was, that most of the guests resembled the ancestors of John's family, and were known to him by their resemblance to pictures which mouldered in the castle, or by traditionary description. At the head, the founder of the race, dressed like some mighty baron, or rather some Galwegian prince, sat with his lady. There was a difference of opinion between these ghostly personages concerning our honest John. The chief was inclined to receive him graciously; the lady considered him, from his mean marriage, as utterly unworthy of their name and board. The upshot is, that the chief discovers to his descendant the means of finding a huge treasure concealed in the castle; the lady assures him that the discovery shall never avail him. In the morning no trace can be discovered of the singular personages who had occupied the hall. But John sought for and discovered the vault where the spoils of the Southrons were concealed, rolled away the covering stone, and feasted his eyes on a range of massy chests of iron, filled doubtless with treasure. As he deliberated on the best means of bringing them up, and descending into the vault, he observed it began slowly to fill with water. Baling and pumping were resorted to, and when he had exhausted his own and his wife's strength, they summoned the assistance of the neighbourhood. But the vengeance of the visionary lady was perfect: the waters of the lake had forced their way into the vault, and John, after a year or two spent in draining and so forth, died broken-hearted, the last Baron of Plenton.

"Such is the tale, of which the incidents seem new, and the interest capable of being rendered striking; the story admits of the highest degree of decoration, both by poetry, music, and scenery, and I propose (in behalf of my godson) to take some pains in dramatizing it. As thus, you shall play John, as you can speak a little Scotch; I will make him what the baron of Bradwardine would have been in his circumstances, and he shall be alternately ludicrous from his family pride and prejudices, contrasted with his poverty, and respectable from his just and independent tone of feeling and character. I think Scotland is entitled to have something on the stage to balance Macklin's two worthies.\* You understand the dialect will be only tinged with the national dialect—not that the Baron is to speak broad Scotch, while all the others talk English. His wife and he shall have one child, a daughter, suitored unto by the conceited young parson or schoolmaster of the village, whose addresses are countenanced by her mother, and by Halbert the hunter, youth of unknown descent. Now this youth shall be the rightful heir and representative of the English owners of the treasure, of which they had been robbed by the baron's ancestors, for which unjust act their spirits still walked the earth. These, with a substantial character or two, and the

\* Sir Archy MacSarcasm and Sir Pertinax MacSycophant.

ghostly personages, shall mingle as they may ; and the discovery of the youth's birth shall break the spell of the treasure-chamber. I will make the ghosts talk as never ghosts talked in the body or out of it ; and the music may be as unearthly as you can get it. The rush of the shadows into the castle shall be seen through the window of the baron's apartment in the flat scene. The ghost's banquet and many other circumstances may give great exercise to the scene-painter and dresser. If you like this plan, you had better suspend any other for the present. In my opinion it has the infinite merit of being perfectly new in plot and structure, and I will set about the sketch as soon as my strength is restored in some measure by air and exercise. I am sure I can finish it in a fortnight then. Ever yours truly,  
"W. SCOTT."

About the time when this letter was written, a newspaper paragraph having excited the apprehension of two, or I should say three, of his dearest friends that his life was in actual danger, Scott wrote to them as follows—

"MY DEAR MORRITT,—

"I hasten to acquaint you that I am in the land of life, and thriving, though I have had a slight shake, and still feel the consequences of medical treatment. I had been plagued all through this winter with cramps in my stomach, which I endured as a man of mould might, and endeavoured to combat them by drinking scalding water and so forth. As they grew rather unpleasantly frequent, I had reluctant recourse to Baillie. But before his answer arrived on the 5th, I had a most violent attack, which broke up a small party at my house, and sent me to bed roaring like a bull-calf. All sorts of remedies were applied, as in the case of Gil Blas' pretended colic, but such was the pain of the real disorder, that it outdevilled the doctor hollow. \* \* \* The symptoms only gave way to very profuse bleeding and blistering, which, under higher assistance, saved my life. My recovery was slow and tedious from the state of exhaustion. I could neither stir for weakness and giddiness, nor read for dazzling in my eyes, nor listen for a whizzing sound in my ears, nor even think for lack of the power of arranging my ideas. So I had a comfortless time of it for about a week. Even yet I by no means feel as the copy-book hath it,

" 'The lion bold, which the lamb doth hold ;

"on the contrary, I am as weak as water. They tell me (of course) I must renounce every creature comfort, as my friend Jedediah calls it. As for dinner and so forth, I care little about it ; but toast and water and three glasses of wine sound like hard laws to me. However, to parody the lamentation of Hassan, the camel-driver,

" 'The lily health outvies the grape's bright ray,  
 And life is dearer than the usquebae ;

"so I shall be amenable to discipline. \* \* \* I take enough of exercise and enough of rest ; but unluckily they are like a Lapland year, divided as one night and one day. In the vacation I never sit down ; in the session-time I seldom rise up. But all this must be better arranged in future ; and I trust I shall live to weary out all your kindness.

"I am obliged to break off hastily. I trust I shall be able to go over the Fell in the end of summer, which will rejoice me much, for the sound of the woods of Rokeby is lovely in mine ear. Ever yours,

"WALTER SCOTT."

On the 29th of March, 1817, John Philip Kemble, after going through the round of his chief parts, to the delight of the Edinburgh audience, took his final leave of them as Macbeth, and in the costume of that character delivered a farewell address, penned for him by Scott. No one who witnessed that scene, and heard the lines as then recited, can ever expect to be again interested to the same extent by anything occurring within the walls of a theatre; nor was I ever present at any public dinner in all its circumstances more impressive than was that which occurred a few days afterwards, when Kemble's Scotch friends and admirers assembled round him, Francis Jeffrey being chairman, Walter Scott and John Wilson the croupiers.

Shortly before this time Mr. William Laidlaw had met with misfortunes, which rendered it necessary for him to give up the lease of a farm on which he had been for some years settled in Midlothian. He was now anxiously looking about him for some new establishment, and it occurred to Scott that it might be mutually advantageous, as well as agreeable, if his excellent friend would consent to come and occupy a house on his property, and endeavour, under his guidance, to make such literary exertions as might raise his income to an amount adequate for his comfort. The prospect of obtaining such a neighbour was, no doubt, the more welcome to *Abbotsford and Kaeside*, from its opening at this period of fluctuating health; and Laidlaw, who had for twenty years loved and revered him, considered the proposal with far greater delight than the most lucrative appointment on any noble domain in the island could have afforded him. Though possessed of a lively and searching sagacity as to things in general, he had always been as to his own worldly interests simple as a child. His tastes and habits were all modest; and when he looked forward to spending the remainder of what had not hitherto been a successful life, under the shadow of the genius that he had worshipped almost from boyhood, his gentle heart was all happiness. He surveyed with glistening eyes the humble cottage in which his friend proposed to lodge him, his wife, and his little ones, and said to himself that he should write no more sad songs on *Forest Flittings*.\*

Scott's notes to him at this time afford a truly charming picture of thoughtful and respectful delicacy on both sides. Mr. Laidlaw, for example, appears to have hinted that he feared his friend, in making the proposal as to the house at Kaeside, might have perhaps in some degree overlooked the feelings of *Laird Moss*, who, having sold his land several months before, had as yet continued to occupy his old homestead. Scott answers:—

\* Mr. Laidlaw did not publish many verses; but his song of "Lucy's Flitting"—a simple and pathetic picture of a poor Ettrick maiden's feelings in leaving a service where she had been happy—has long been and must ever be a favourite with all who understand the delicacies of the Scottish dialect, and the manners of the district in which the scene is laid.

'MY DEAR SIR,—

"Edinburgh, April 5, 1817.

"Nothing can give me more pleasure than the prospect of your making yourself comfortable at Kaeside till some good thing casts up. I have not put Mr. Moss to any inconvenience, for I only requested an answer, giving him leave to sit if he had a mind—and of free will he leaves my premises void and redd at Whit Sunday. I suspect the house is not in good order, but we shall get it brushed up a little. Without affectation I consider myself the obliged party in this matter—or at any rate, it is a mutual benefit, and you shall have grass for a cow, and so forth—whatever you want. I am sure when you are so near I shall find some literary labour for you that will make ends meet. Yours, in haste, "W. SCOTT."

He had before this time made considerable progress in another historical sketch (that of the year 1815) for the Edinburgh Annual Register; and the first literary labour which he provided for Laidlaw appears to have been arranging for the same volume a set of newspaper articles, usually printed under the head of *Chronicle*, to which were appended some little extracts of new books of travels, and the like miscellanies. The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, subsequently known by the name of its projector, Blackwood, commenced in April of this year; and one of its editors, Mr. Thomas Pringle, being a Teviotdale man and an old acquaintance of Laidlaw's, offered to the latter the care of its *Chronicle* department also,—not perhaps without calculating that, in case Laidlaw's connection with the new journal should become at all a strict one, Scott would be induced to give it occasionally the benefit of his own literary assistance. He accordingly did not write—being unwell at the time—but *dictated* to Pringle a collection of anecdotes concerning Scottish gipsies, which attracted a good deal of notice; \* and I believe he also assisted Laidlaw in drawing up one or more articles on the subject of Scottish superstitions. But the bookseller and Pringle soon quarrelled, and, the magazine assuming, on the retirement of the latter, a high Tory character, Laidlaw's Whig feelings induced him to renounce its alliance; while Scott, having no kindness for Blackwood personally, and disapproving (though he chuckled over it) the reckless extravagance of juvenile satire which by-and-bye distinguished his journal, appears to have easily acquiesced in the propriety of Laidlaw's determination. I insert meantime a few notes, which will show with what care and kindness he watched over Laidlaw's operations for the Annual Register.

"DEAR SIR,—

"Edinburgh, June 16, 1817.

"I enclose you 'rare guerdon'—better than remuneration—namely, a cheque for £25, for the Chronicle part of the Register. The incidents selected should have some reference to amusement as well as information, and may be occasionally abridged in the narration; but, after all, paste and scissors form your principal materials. You must look out for two or three good original articles; and, if you would read and take pains to abridge one or two curious books of travels, I would send out the volumes. Could I once get the head of the concern fairly round before the wind

\* These anecdotes were subsequently inserted in the Introduction to *Guy Mannering*.

again, I am sure I could make it £100 a year to you ; in the present instance it will be at least £50. Yours truly, "W. S."

"Edinburgh, July 3, 1817.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I send you Adam's and Riley's Travels. You will observe I don't want a review of the books, or a detail of these persons' adventures, but merely a short article expressing the light, direct or doubtful, which they have thrown on the interior of Africa. 'Recent Discoveries in Africa' will be a proper title. I hope to find you materially amended, or rather quite stout, when I come out on Saturday. I am quite well this morning. Yours, in haste, "W. S."

"P.S.—I add Mariner's Tonga Islands and Campbell's Voyage. Pray take great care of them, as I am a coxcomb about my books, and hate specks or spots. Take care of yourself, and want for nothing that Abbotsford can furnish."

These notes have carried us down to the middle of the year. But I must now turn to some others, which show that before Whitsuntide, when Laidlaw settled at Kaeside, negotiations were on foot respecting another novel.

"DEAR JOHN,—

"I have a good subject for a work of fiction *in petto*. What do you think Constable would give for a smell of it? You ran away without taking leave the other morning, or I wished to have spoken to you about it. I don't mean a continuation of Jedediah, because there might be some delicacy in putting that by the original publishers. You may write if anything occurs to you on this subject: it will not interrupt my History. By the way, I have a great lot of the Register ready for delivery, and no man asks for it. I shall want to pay up some cash at Whit Sunday, which will make me draw on my brains. Yours truly, "W. SCOTT."

"DEAR JOHN,—

"I shall be much obliged to you to come here with Constable on Monday, as he proposes a visit, and it will save time. By-the-way, you must attend that the usual quantity of stock is included in the arrangement—that is £600 for 6,000 copies. My sum is £1,700, payable in May—a round advance, by'r Lady!—but I think I am entitled to it, considering what I have twined off hitherto on such occasions. I make a point on your coming with Constable, health allowing."

The result of this meeting is indicated in a note scribbled by John Ballantyne at the bottom of the foregoing letter, before it was seen by his brother the printer—

"DEAR JAMES,—

"I am this moment returned from Abbotsford, with entire and full success. Wish me joy. I shall gain above £600—Constable taking my share of stock also. The title is *Rob Roy, by the Author of Waverley!!!* Keep this letter for me. "J. B."

On the same page there is written, in fresher ink, which marks, no

doubt, the time when John pasted it into his collection of private papers now before me—

"N.B.—I did gain above £1,200.—J. B."

The title of this novel was suggested by Constable, and he told me years afterwards the difficulty he had to get it adopted by the author. "What!" said he, "Mr. Accoucheur, must you be setting up for Mr. Sponsor too?—but let's hear it." Constable said the name of the real hero would be the best possible name for the book. "Nay," answered Scott, "never let me have to write up to a name. You well know I have generally adopted a title that told nothing." The bookseller, however, persevered; and after the trio had dined, these scruples gave way.

On rising from table, according to Constable, they sallied out to the green before the door of the cottage, and all in the highest spirits enjoyed the fine May evening. John Ballantyne, hopping up and down in his glee, exclaimed, "Is Rob's gun here, Mr. Scott? would you object to my trying the auld barrel with a *few de joy*?" "Nay, Mr. Puff," said Scott, "it would burst and blow you to the devil before your time." "Johnny, my man," said Constable, "what the mischief puts drawing at sight into your head?" Scott laughed heartily at this innuendo; and then observing that the little man felt somewhat sore, called attention to the notes of a bird in the adjoining shrubbery. "And, by-the-bye," said he, as they continued listening, "'tis a long time, Johnny, since we have had the Cobbler of Kelso." Mr. Puff forthwith jumped up on a mass of stone, and seating himself in the proper attitude of one working with his awl, began a favourite interlude, mimicking a certain son of Crispin, at whose stall Scott and he had often lingered when they were schoolboys, and a blackbird, the only companion of his cell, that used to sing to him, while he talked and whistled to it all day long. With this performance Scott was always delighted: nothing could be richer than the contrast of the bird's wild sweet notes, some of which he imitated with wonderful skill, and the accompaniment of the Cobbler's hoarse cracked voice, uttering all manner of endearing epithets, which Johnny multiplied and varied in a style worthy of the Old Women in Rabelais at the birth of Pantagruel. I often wondered that Matthews, who borrowed so many good things from John Ballantyne, allowed this Cobbler, which was certainly the masterpiece, to escape him.

Scott himself had probably exceeded that evening the three glasses of wine sanctioned by his Sangrados. "I never," said Constable, "had found him so disposed to communicate about what he meant to do. Though he had had a return of his illness but the day before, he continued for an hour or more to walk backwards and forwards on the green, talking and laughing. He told us he was sure he should make a hit in a Glasgow weaver, whom he would *ravel up with Rob*; and fairly outshone the Cobbler, in an extempore dialogue between the Baillie and the cateran—something not unlike what the book gives us as passing in the Glasgow Tolbooth."

Mr. Puff might well exult in the "full and entire success" of this trip to Abbotsford. His friend had made it a *sine quâ non* in the bargain with Constable that he should have a third share in the bookseller's

moiety of the copyright; and—though Johnny had no more trouble about the publishing or selling of Rob Roy than his own Cobbler of Kelso—this stipulation had secured him a *bonus* of £1,200 before two years passed; moreover, one must admire his adroitness in persuading Constable, during their journey back to Edinburgh, to relieve him of that fraction of his own old stock with which his unhazardous share in the new bargain was burdened. Scott's kindness continued as long as John Ballantyne lived to provide for him a constant succession of similar advantages at the same easy rate; and Constable, from deference to Scott's wishes, and from his own liking of the humorous auctioneer, appears to have submitted with hardly a momentary grudge to this heavy tax on his most important ventures.

During the summer term of 1817, Scott seems to have laboured chiefly on his *History of 1815 for the Register*, which was published in August; but he also found time to draw up the Introduction for a richly embellished quarto, entitled *Border Antiquities*, which came out a month later. This valuable essay, containing large additions to the information previously embodied in the *Minstrelsy*, has been included in the late collection of his *Miscellaneous Prose*, and has thus obtained a circulation not to be expected for it in the original costly form.

Upon the rising of the Court in July, he made an excursion to the Lennox, chiefly that he might visit a cave at the head of Loch Lomond, said to have been a favourite retreat of his hero, Rob Roy. He was accompanied to the seat of his friend, Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, by Captain Adam Ferguson (the *Long Linton* of the days of his apprenticeship), and thence to Glasgow, where, under the auspices of a kind and intelligent acquaintance, Mr. John Smith, bookseller, he refreshed his recollection of the noble cathedral and other localities of the birthplace of Baillie Jarvie. Mr. Smith took care also to show the tourists the most remarkable novelties in the great manufacturing establishments of his flourishing city; and he remembers particularly the delight which Scott expressed on seeing the process of *singeing* muslin—that is, of divesting the finished web of all superficial knots and irregularities, by passing it, with the rapidity of lightning, over a rolling bar of red-hot iron. "The man that imagined this," said Scott, "was the *Shakespeare of the wabsters*—

"Things out of hope are compassed oft with vent'ring."

The following note indicates the next stages of his progress:—

*To his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle.*

"Sanquhar, 2 o'clock, July 30, 1817.

"From Ross, where the clouds on Ben Lomond are sleeping—  
From Greenock, where Clyde to the ocean is sweeping—  
From Largs, where the Scotch gave the Northmen a drilling—  
From Ardrossan, whose harbour cost many a shilling—  
From Old Cumnock, where beds are as hard as a plank, sir—  
From a chop and green pease, and a chicken in Sanquhar,  
This eve, please the Fates, at Drumlanrig we anchor.

"W. S."

The poet and Captain Ferguson remained a week at Drumlanrig, and thence repaired together to Abbotsford. By this time, the foundations of that part of the existing house, which extends from the hall westwards

to the original courtyard, had been laid ; and Scott now found a new source of constant occupation in watching the proceedings of his masons. He had, moreover, no lack of employment further a-field ; for he was now negotiating with another neighbouring landowner for the purchase of an addition, of more consequence than any he had hitherto made, to his estate. In the course of the autumn he concluded this matter, and became, for the price of £10,000, proprietor of the lands of *Toftfield*,\* on which there had recently been erected a substantial mansion-house, fitted in all points for the accommodation of a genteel family. This circumstance offered a temptation which much quickened Scott's zeal for completing his arrangement. The venerable Professor Ferguson had died a year before ; Captain Adam Ferguson was at home on half-pay ; and Scott now saw the means of securing for himself, henceforth, the immediate neighbourhood of the companion of his youth, and his amiable sisters. Ferguson, who had written, from the lines of Torres Vedras, his hopes of finding, when the war should be over, some sheltering cottage upon the Tweed within a walk of Abbotsford, was delighted to see his dreams realized ; and the family took up their residence next spring at the new house of Toftfield, on which Scott then bestowed, at the ladies' request, the name of Huntly Burn ; this more harmonious designation being taken from the mountain brook which passes through its grounds and garden,—the same famous in tradition as the scene of Thomas the Rhymer's interviews with the Queen of Fairy. The upper part of the *Rhymer's Glen*, through which this brook finds its way from the Cauldshields Loch to Toftfield, had been included in a previous purchase. He was now master of all these haunts of "True Thomas," and of the whole ground of the battle of Melrose from *Skirmish Field* to *Turn-again*. His enjoyment of the new territories was, however, interrupted by various returns of his cramp, and the depression of spirit which always attended, in his case, the use of opium,—the only medicine that seemed to have power over the disease.

It was while struggling with such langour, on one lovely evening of this autumn, that he composed the beautiful verses, "The sun upon the Weirdlaw Hill." They mark the very spot of their birth,—namely, the then naked height overhanging the northern side of the Cauldshields Loch, from which Melrose Abbey to the eastward, and the hills of Ettrick and Yarrow to the west, are now visible over a wide range of rich woodland,—all the work of the poet's hand.

He again alludes to his illness in a letter to Mr. Morritt :—

"Abbotsford, Aug. 11, 1817.

"MY DEAR MORRITT,—

"I am arrived from a little tour in the west of Scotland, and had hoped, in compliance with your kind wish, to have indulged myself with a skip over the Border as far as Rokeby, about the end of this month. But my fate denies me this pleasure ; for, in consequence of one or two

\* On completing this purchase, Scott writes to John Ballantyne :—"Dear John, —I have closed with Usher for his beautiful patrimony, which makes me a great laird. I am afraid the people will take me up for coming. Indeed, these novels, while their attractions last, are something like it. I am very glad of *your* good prospects. Still I cry, *Prudence! Prudence!*—Yours truly, "W. S."

banders, during my absence, in executing my new premises, I perceive the necessity of remaining at the helm while they are going on. Our masons, though excellent workmen, are too little accustomed to the gimcracks of their art to be trusted with the execution of a *bravura* plan, without constant inspection. Besides, the said labourers lay me under the necessity of labouring a little myself; and I find I can no longer with impunity undertake to make one week's hard work supply the omissions of a fortnight's idleness. Like you, I have abridged my creature-comforts—as Old Mortality would call them—renouncing beer and ale on all ordinary occasions, also pastry, fruit, &c., and all that tends to acidity. These are awkward warnings; but *sat est viciasse*. To have lived respected and regarded by some of the best men in our age is enough for an individual like me; the rest must be as God wills, and when He wills."

Two or three days after this was written, Scott first saw Washington Irving, who has recorded his visit in a delightful essay.

Scott had received the "History of New York, by Knickerbocker," shortly after its appearance in 1812, from an accomplished American traveller, Mr. Brevoort; and the admirable humour of this early work had led him to anticipate the brilliant career which its author has since run. Mr. Thomas Campbell being no stranger to Scott's high estimation of Irving's genius, gave him a letter of introduction, which, halting his chaise on the high road above Abbotsford, he modestly sent down to the house "with a card, on which he had written, that he was on his way to the ruins of Melrose, and wished to know whether it would be agreeable to Mr. Scott to receive a visit from him in the course of the morning." Scott's family well remember the delight with which he received this announcement—he was at breakfast, and sallied forth instantly, dogs and children after him as usual, to greet the guest, and conduct him in person from the highway to the door.

"The noise of my chaise," says Irving, "had disturbed the quiet of the establishment. Out sallied the warder of the castle, a black greyhound, and leaping on one of the blocks of stone, began a furious barking. This alarm brought out the whole garrison of dogs, all open-mouthed and vociferous. In a little while the lord of the castle himself made his appearance. I knew him at once, by the likenesses that had been published of him. He came limping up the gravel walk, aiding himself by a stout walking-staff, but moving rapidly and with vigour. By his side jogged along a large iron-grey staghound, of most grave demeanour, who took no part in the clamour of the canine rabble, but seemed to consider himself bound, for the dignity of the house, to give me a courteous reception.

"Before Scott reached the gate, he called out in a hearty tone, welcoming me to Abbotsford, and asking news of Campbell. Arriving at the door of the chaise, he grasped me warmly by the hand: 'Come, drive down, drive down to the house,' said he; 'ye're just in time for breakfast, and afterwards ye shall see all the wonders of the Abbey.'

"I would have excused myself on the plea of having already made my breakfast. 'Hut, man!' cried he, 'a ride in the morning in the keen air of the Scotch hills is warrant enough for a second breakfast.'

"I was accordingly whirled to the portal of the cottage, and in a few moments found myself seated at the breakfast-table. There was no one present but the family, which consisted of Mrs. Scott; her eldest daughter, Sophia, then a fine girl about seventeen; Miss Ann Scott, two or three years younger; Walter, a well-grown stripling; and Charles, a lively boy, eleven or twelve years of age.

"I soon felt myself quite at home, and my heart in a glow with the cordial welcome I experienced. I had thought to make a mere morning visit, but found I was not to be let off so lightly. 'You must not think our neighbourhood is to be read in a morning like a newspaper,' said Scott: 'it takes several days of study for an observant traveller, that has a relish for auld-world trumpery. After breakfast you shall make your visit to Melrose Abbey. I shall not be able to accompany you, as I have some household affairs to attend to; but I will put you in charge of my son Charles, who is very learned in all things touching the old ruin and the neighbourhood it stands in; and he and my friend Johnnie Bower will tell you the whole truth about it, with a great deal more that you are not called upon to believe, unless you be a true and nothing-doubting antiquary. When you come back, I'll take you out on a ramble about the neighbourhood. To-morrow we will take a look at the Yarrow, and the next day we will drive over to Dryburgh Abbey, which is a fine old ruin well worth your seeing.'—In a word, before Scott had got through with his plan, I found myself committed for a visit of several days, and it seemed as if a little realm of romance was suddenly open before me."

After breakfast, while Scott no doubt wrote a chapter of Rob Roy, Mr. Irving, under young Charles's guidance, saw Melrose Abbey, and Johnnie Bower the elder, whose son long since inherited his office as showman of the ruins, and all his enthusiasm about them and their poet. • The senior on this occasion "was loud in his praises of the affability of Scott. 'He'll come here sometimes,' said he, 'with great folks in his company, and the first I'll know of it is hearing his voice calling out "Johnny!—Johnny Bower!"—and when I go out I'm sure to be greeted with a joke or a pleasant word. He'll stand and crack an' laugh wi' me just like an auld wife,—and to think that of a man that has such an awfu' knowledge o' history!'"

On his return from the Abbey, Irving found Scott ready for a ramble. I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of extracting some parts of his description of it.

"As we sallied forth every dog in the establishment turned out to attend us. There was the old staghound, Maida, that I have already mentioned, a noble animal, and Hamlet, the black greyhound, a wild thoughtless youngster, not yet arrived at the years of discretion; and Finette, a beautiful setter, with soft, silken hair, long pendent ears, and a mild eye, the parlour favourite. When in front of the house we were joined by a superannuated greyhound, who came from the kitchen wagging his tail, and was cheered by Scott as an old friend and comrade. In our walks he would frequently pause in conversation to notice his dogs, and speak to them as if rational companions; and, indeed, there appears to be a vast deal of rationality in these faithful attendants on man, derived from their close intimacy with him. Maida deputed himself with a gravity becoming his age and size, and seemed to consider himself called upon to preserve a great degree of dignity and decorum in our society. As he jogged along a little distance ahead of us, the young dogs would gambol about him, leap on his neck, worry at his ears, and endeavour to tease him into a gambol. The old dog would keep on for a long time with imperturbable solemnity, now and then seeming to rebuke the wantonness of his young companions. At length he would make a sudden turn, seize one of them, and tumble him in the dust, then giving a glance at us, as much as to say, 'You see, gentlemen, I can't help givin' way to this nonsense,' would resume his gravity, and jog on as before. Scott amused himself with these peculiarities. 'I make no doubt,' said he, 'when Maida is alone with these young dogs, he throws gravity aside, and plays the boy as much as any of them; but he is ashamed to do so in our company, and seems to say, "Ha' done with your nonsense; what will the laird and that other gentleman think of me if I give way to such foolery?"'

"Scott amused himself with the peculiarities of another of his dogs, a little shame-

faced terrier, with large glassy eyes, one of the most sensitive little bodies to insult and indignity in the world. 'If ever he whipped him,' he said, 'the little fellow would sneak off and hide himself from the light of day in a lumber garret, from whence there was no drawing him forth but by the sound of the chopping-knife, as if chopping up his victuals, when he would steal forth with humiliated and downcast look, but would skulk away again if any one regarded him.'

"While we were discussing the humours and peculiarities of our canine companions, some object provoked their spleen, and produced a sharp and petulant barking from the smaller fry; but it was some time before Maida was sufficiently roused to ramp forward two or three bounds, and join the chorus with a deep-mouthed *bow wow*. It was but a transient outbreak, and he returned instantly, wagging his tail, and looking up dubiously in his master's face, uncertain whether he would receive censure or applause. 'Ay, ay, old boy!' cried Scott, 'you have done wonders; you have shaken the Eldon Hills with your roaring: you may now lay by your artillery for the rest of the day. Maida, continued he, 'is like the great gun at Constantinople: it takes so long to get it ready, that the smaller guns can fire off a dozen times first; but when it does go off, it plays the very devil!'

"These simple anecdotes may serve to show the delightful play of Scott's humours and feelings in private life. His domestic animals were his friends. Everything about him seemed to rejoice in the light of his countenance.

"Our ramble took us on the hills commanding an extensive prospect. 'Now,' said Scott, 'I have brought you, like the pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress, to the top of the Delectable Mountains, that I may show you all the goodly regions hereabouts. Yonder is Lammermuir and Smalholmie; and there you have Galashiels, and Torrowdale, and Gala Water; and in that direction you see Teviotdale and the Brigs of Yarrow, and Ettrick stream winding along like a silver thread, to throw itself into the Tweed.' He went on thus to call over names celebrated in Scottish song, and most of which had recently received a romantic interest from his own pen. In fact, I saw a great part of the Border country spread out before me, and could trace the scenes of those poems and romances which had in a manner bewitched the world.

"I gazed about me for a time with mute surprise, I may almost say, with disappointment. I beheld a mere succession of grey waving hills, line beyond line, as far as my eye could reach, monotonous in their aspect, and so destitute of trees, that one could almost see a stout fly walking along their profile; and the far-famed Tweed appeared a naked stream, flowing between bare hills, without a tree or thicket on its banks; and yet such had been the magic web of poetry and romance thrown over the whole, that it had a greater charm for me than the richest scenery I had beheld in England. I could not help giving utterance to my thoughts. Scott hummed for a moment to himself, and looked grave; he had no idea of having his muse complimented at the expense of his native hills. 'It may be pertinacity,' said he at length; 'but to my eye, these grey hills, and all this wild Border country, have beauties peculiar to themselves. I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold, and stern, and solitary about it. When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented garden land, I begin to wish myself back again among my own honest grey hills; and if I did not see the heather at least once a year, I think I should die!' The last words were said with an honest warmth, accompanied by a thump on the ground with his staff, by way of emphasis, that showed his heart was in his speech. He vindicated the Tweed, too, as a beautiful stream in itself; and observed, that he did not dislike it for being bare of trees, probably from having been much of an angler in his time; and an angler does not like to have a stream overhung by trees, which embarrass him in the exercise of his rod and line.

"I took occasion to plead, in like manner, the associations of early life for my disappointment in respect to the surrounding scenery. I had been so accustomed to see hills crowned with forests, and streams breaking their way through a wilderness of trees, that all my ideas of romantic landscape were apt to be well wooded. 'Ay, and that's the great charm of your country,' cried Scott. 'You love the forest as I do the heather; but I would not have you think I do not feel the glory

of a great woodland prospect. There is nothing I should like more than to be in the midst of one of your grand wild original forests, with the idea of hundreds of miles of untrodden forest around me. I once saw at Leith an immense stick of timber, just landed from America. It must have been an enormous tree when it stood in its native soil, at its full height, and with all its branches. I gazed at it with admiration; it seemed like one of the gigantic obelisks which are now and then brought from Egypt to shame the pigmy monuments of Europe; and, in fact, these vast aboriginal trees, that have sheltered the Indians before the intrusion of the white men, are the monuments and antiquities of your country.

"The conversation here turned upon Campbell's poem of Gertrude of Wyoming, as illustrative of the poetic materials furnished by American scenery. Scott cited several passages of it with great delight. 'What a pity it is,' said he, 'that Campbell does not write more and oftener, and give full sweep to his genius! He has wings that would bear him to the skies; and he does, now and then, spread them grandly, but folds them up again, and resumes his perch, as if he was afraid to launch away. What a grand idea is that,' he said, 'about prophetic boding, or, in common parlance, second sight—

" 'Coming events cast their shadows before'

" 'The fact is,' added he, 'Campbell is, in a manner, a bugbear to himself. The brightness of his early success is a detriment to all his further efforts. *He is afraid of the shadow that his own fame casts before him.*'

"We had not walked much farther before we saw the two Miss Scotts advancing along the hillside to meet us. The morning's studies being over, they had set off to take a ramble on the hills, and gather heather blossoms with which to decorate their hair for dinner. As they came bounding lightly like young fawns, and their dresses fluttering in the pure summer breeze, I was reminded of Scott's own description of his children, in his Introduction to one of the cantos of *Marmion*,—

" 'My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,  
As best befits the mountain child,' &c.

"As they approached the dogs all sprang forward and gambolled around them. They joined us with countenances full of health and glee. Sophia, the eldest, was the most lively and joyous, having much of her father's varied spirit in conversation, and seeming to catch excitement from his words and looks; Ann was of a quieter mood, rather silent, owing in some measure, no doubt, to her being some years younger."

Having often, many years afterwards, heard Irving speak warmly of William Laidlaw, I must not omit the following passage:—

"One of my pleasantest rambles with Scott about the neighbourhood of Abbotsford was taken in company with Mr. William Laidlaw, the steward of his estate. This was a gentleman for whom Scott entertained a particular value. He had been born to a competency, had been well educated, his mind was richly stored with varied information, and he was a man of sterling moral worth. Having been reduced by misfortune, Scott had got him to take charge of his estate. He lived at a small farm on the hillside above Abbotsford, and was treated by Scott as a cherished and confidential friend rather than a dependant.

"That day at dinner we had Mr. Laidlaw and his wife, and a female friend who accompanied them. The latter was a very intelligent respectable person, about the middle age, and was treated with particular attention and courtesy by Scott. Our dinner was a most agreeable one, for the guests were evidently cherished visitors to the house, and felt that they were appreciated. When they were gone, Scott spoke of them in the most cordial manner. 'I wished to show you,' said he, 'some of our really excellent, plain Scotch people: not fine gentlemen and ladies, for such you can meet everywhere, and they are everywhere the same. The cha-

acter of a nation is not to be learnt from its fine folks.' He then went on with a particular eulogium on the lady who had accompanied the Laidlaws. She was the daughter, he said, of a poor country clergyman, who had died in debt and left her an orphan and destitute. Having had a good plain education, she immediately set up a child's school, and had soon a numerous flock under her care, by which she earned a decent maintenance. That, however, was not her main object. Her first care was to pay off her father's debts, that no ill word or ill will might rest upon his memory. This, by dint of Scotch economy, backed by filial reverence and pride, she accomplished, though in the effort she subjected herself to every privation. Not content with this, she in certain instances refused to take pay for the tuition of the children of some of her neighbours who had befriended her father in his need, and had since fallen into poverty. 'In a word,' added Scott, 'she's a fine old Scotch girl, and I delight in her more than in many a fine lady I have known, and I have known many of the finest.'

"The evening passed away delightfully in a quaint-looking apartment, half study, half drawing-room. Scott read several passages from the old romance of Arthur, with a fine deep sonorous voice, and a gravity of tone that seemed to suit the antiquated black-letter volume. It was a rich treat to hear such a work read by such a person and in such a place; and his appearance, as he sat reading in a large arm-chair, with his favourite hound Maida at his feet, and surrounded by books and reliques and Border trophies, would have formed an admirable and most characteristic picture. When I retired for the night, I found it almost impossible to sleep: the idea of being under the roof of Scott—of being on the Borders, on the Tweed, in the very centre of that region which had, for some time past, been the favourite scene of romantic fiction; and, above all, the recollections of the ramble I had taken, the company in which I had taken it, and the conversation which had passed, all fermented in my mind, and nearly drove sleep from my pillow.

"On the following morning the sun darted his beams from over the hills through the low lattice of my window. I rose at an early hour, and looked out between the branches of eglantine which overhung the casement. To my surprise Scott was already up and forth, seated on a fragment of stone, and chatting with the workmen employed in the new building. I had supposed, after the time he had wasted upon me yesterday, he would be closely occupied this morning; but he appeared like a man of leisure, who had nothing to do but bask in the sunshine and amuse himself. I soon dressed myself and joined him. He talked about his proposed plans of Abbotsford; happy would it have been for him could he have contented himself with his delightful little vine-covered cottage, and the simple yet hearty and hospitable style in which he lived at the time of my visit!"

Among other visitors who succeeded the distinguished American that autumn were Lady Byron, the wife of the poet, and the great artist, Mr., now Sir David, Wilkie, who then executed for Captain Ferguson that pleasing little picture, in which Scott and his family are represented as a group of peasants, while the gallant soldier himself figures by them in the character of a gamekeeper, or perhaps poacher. Mr. Irving has given, in the little work from which I have quoted so liberally, an amusing account of the delicate scruples of Wilkie about soliciting Scott to devote a morning to the requisite sitting, until, after lingering for several days, he at length became satisfied that, by whatever magic his host might contrive to keep Ballantyne's presses in full play, he had always abundance of leisure for matters less important than Ferguson's destined heirloom.

The following note is without date. It accompanied, no doubt, the last proof-sheet of *Rob Roy*, and was therefore in all probability written about ten days before the 31st of December, 1817—on which day the novel was published.

*To Mr. James Ballantyne, St. John Street.*

"DEAR JAMES,—

"With great joy  
I send you Roy.  
'T was a tough job,  
But we're done with Rob.

"I forget if I mentioned Terry in my list of friends. Pray send me two or three copies as soon as you can. It were pity to make the Grinder\* pay carriage. Yours ever, "W. S."

The novel had indeed been "a tough job"—for lightly and airily as it reads, the author had struggled almost throughout with the pains of cramp or the lassitude of opium.

\*They called Daniel Terry among themselves "The Grinder," in double allusion to the song of *Terry the Grinder*, and to some harsh under-notes of their friend's voice.

## CHAPTER XV.

LINES WRITTEN IN ILLNESS—WASHINGTON IRVING—SECOND SERIES OF  
TALES OF MY LANDLORD—SCOTT'S HOME LIFE—HEART OF MID-  
LOTHIAN PUBLISHED.

ROB ROY and his wife, Baillie Nicol Jarvie and his housekeeper, Die Vernon and Rashleigh Osbaldistone—these boldly drawn and most happily contrasted personages—were welcomed as warmly as the most fortunate of their predecessors. Constable's resolution to begin with an edition of 10,000 proved to have been as sagacious as bold; for within a fortnight a second impression of 3,000 was called for; and the subsequent sale of this novel has considerably exceeded 40,000 more. ●

Scott, however, had not waited for this new burst of applause. As soon as he came within view of the completion of Rob Roy, he desired John Ballantyne to propose to Constable and Co. a second series of the Tales of my Landlord, to be comprised, like the first, in four volumes, and ready for publication by "the King's birthday;" that is, the 4th of June, 1818. "I have hungered and thirsted," he wrote, "to see the end of those shabby borrowings among friends; they have all been wiped out except the good Duke's £4,000; and I will not suffer either new offers of land or anything else to come in the way of that clearance. I expect that you will be able to arrange this resurrection of Jedediah, so that £5,000 shall be at my order."

Mr. Rigdum used to glory in recounting that he acquitted himself on this occasion with a species of dexterity not contemplated in his commission. He well knew how sorely Constable had been wounded by seeing the first tales of Jedediah published by Murray and Blackwood, and that the utmost success of Rob Roy would only double his anxiety to keep them out of the field, when the hint should be dropped that a second MS. from Ganderclench might shortly be looked for. He therefore took a convenient opportunity to mention the new scheme as if casually, so as to give Constable the impression that the author's purpose was to divide the second series also between his old rival in Albemarle Street, of whom his jealousy was always most sensitive, and his neighbour Blackwood, whom, if there had been no other grudge, the recent conduct and rapidly increasing sale of his magazine would have been sufficient to make Constable hate with a perfect hatred. To see not only his old Scots Magazine eclipsed, but the authority of the Edinburgh Review itself bearded on its own soil by this juvenile upstart, was to him gall and wormwood; and, moreover, he himself had come in for his share in some of those grotesque *jeux d'esprit* by which, at this period, Blackwood's young Tory wags delighted to assail their elders and betters of the Whig

persuasion. To prevent the proprietor of this new journal from acquiring anything like a hold on the author of Waverley, and thus competing with himself not only in periodical literature, but in the highest of the time, was an object for which, as John Ballantyne shrewdly guessed, Constable would have made at that moment almost any sacrifice. When, therefore, the haughty but trembling bookseller—"The Lord High Constable" (as he had been dubbed by these jesters)—signified his earnest hope that the second Tales of my Landlord were destined to come out under the same auspices with Rob Roy, the plenipotentiary answered with an air of deep regret, that he feared it would be impossible for the author to dispose of the work unless to publishers who should agree to take with it *the whole* of the remaining stock of John Ballantyne and Co.; and Constable, pertinaciously as he had stood out against many more modest propositions of this nature, was so worked upon by his jealous feelings, that his resolution at once gave way. He agreed on the instant to do all that John seemed to shrink from asking, and at one sweep cleared the Angean stable in Hanover Street of unsaleable rubbish to the amount of £5,370! I am assured by his surviving partner that when he had finally redispensed of the stock, he found himself a loser by fully two-thirds of this sum.

Burdened with this heavy condition, the agreement for the sale of 10,000 copies of the embryo series was signed before the end of November, 1817; and on the 7th of January, 1818, Scott wrote as follows to his noble friend:—

*To the Duke of Buccleuch, &c., &c.*

"MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—

"I have the great pleasure of enclosing the discharged bond which your Grace stood engaged in for me, and on my account. The accommodation was of the greatest consequence to me, as it enabled me to retain possession of some valuable literary property, which I must otherwise have suffered to be sold at a time when the booksellers had no money to buy it. My dear Lord, to wish that all your numerous and extensive acts of kindness may be attended with similar advantages to the persons whom you oblige, is wishing you what to your mind will be the best recompense; and to wish that they may be felt by all as gratefully as by me, though you may be careless to hear about that part of the story, is only wishing what is creditable to human nature. I have this moment your more than kind letter, and congratulate your Grace that, in one sense of the word, you can be what you never will be in any other, *ambidexter*. But I am sorry you took so much trouble, and I fear *pains* besides, to display your new talent. Ever your Grace's truly faithful

"WALTER SCOTT."

The closing sentence of this letter refers to a fit of the gout which had disabled the Duke's right hand, but not cooled his zeal on a subject which, throughout January, 1818, occupied, I firmly believe, much more of his correspondent's thoughts by day and dreams by night, than any one, or perhaps than all others, besides. The time now approached when a Commission to examine the Crown-room in the Castle of Edinburgh, which had sprung from one of Scott's conversations with the Prince Regent in 1815, was at length to be acted upon. The minstrel of the

"Rough Clan" had taken care that the name of his chief should stand at the head of the document; but the Duke's now precarious health ultimately prevented him from being present at the discovery of the long-buried and almost forgotten Regalia of Scotland.

The Commissioners, who finally assembled on the 4th of February, were, according to the record—"the Right Hon. Charles Hope, Lord President of the Court of Session; the Right Hon. David Boyle, Lord Justice Clerk; the Right Hon. William Adam, Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court; Major-General John Hope (Commanding the Forces in Scotland); the Solicitor-General (James Wedderburn, Esq.); the Lord Provost of Edinburgh (Kincaid Mackenzie, Esq.); William Clerk, Esq., Principal Clerk of the Jury Court; Henry Jardine, Esq., Deputy Remembrancer in the Exchequer; Thomas Thompson, Esq., Deputy Clerk Register of Scotland; and Walter Scott, Esq., one of the Principal Clerks of Session."

Of the proceedings of this day the reader has a full and particular account in an Essay which Scott penned shortly afterwards, and which is included in his *Prose Miscellanies* (vol. vii.) But I must not omit the contemporaneous letters in which he announced the success of the quest to his friend the Secretary of the Admiralty, and through him to the Regent:—

"Edinburgh, 4th Feb., 1818.

"MY DEAR CROKER,—

"I have the pleasure to assure you the Regalia of Scotland were this day found in perfect preservation. The sword of state and sceptre showed marks of hard usage at some former period, but in all respects agree with the description in Thomson's work.\* I will send you a complete account of the opening to-morrow, as the official account will take some time to draw up. In the meantime I hope you will remain as obstinate in your unbelief as St. Thomas, because then you will come down to satisfy yourself. I know nobody entitled to earlier information, save ONE, to whom you can perhaps find the means of communicating the result of our researches. The post is just going off. Ever yours truly,

"WALTER SCOTT."

"Edinburgh, 5th February, 1818.

"MY DEAR CROKER,—

"I promised I would add something to my report of yesterday, and yet I find I have but little to say. The extreme solemnity of opening sealed doors of oak and iron, and finally breaking open a chest which had been shut since 7th March, 1707, about a hundred and eleven years, gave a sort of interest to our researches, which I can hardly express to you, and it would be very difficult to describe the intense eagerness with which we watched the rising of the lid of the chest, and the progress of workmen in breaking it open, which was neither an easy nor a speedy task. It sounded very hollow when they worked on it with their tools, and I began to lean to your faction of the Little Faiths. However, I never could assign any probable or feasible reason for withdrawing these memorials of ancient independence; and my doubts rather arose from

\* Collection of Inventories and other Records of the Royal Wardrobe and Jewel House, &c. Edin., 1815. 4to.

the conviction that many absurd things are done in public as well as in private life merely out of a hasty impression of passion or resentment. For it was evident the removal of the Regalia might have greatly irritated people's minds here, and offered a fair pretext of breaking the Union which, for thirty years, was the predominant wish of the Scottish nation.

"The discovery of the Regalia has interested people's minds much more strongly than I expected, and is certainly calculated to make a pleasant and favourable impression upon them in respect to the kingly part of the constitution. It would be of the utmost consequence that they should be occasionally shown to them, under proper regulations, and for a small fee. The sword of state is a most beautiful piece of workmanship, a present from Pope Julius II. to James IV. The scabbard is richly decorated with filigree work of silver, double gilded, representing oak-leaves and acorns, executed in a taste worthy that classical age in which the arts revived. A draughtsman has been employed to make sketches of these articles, in order to be laid before his Royal Highness. The fate of these Regalia, which his Royal Highness' goodness has thus restored to light and honour, has, on one or two occasions, been singular enough. They were, in 1652, lodged in the Castle of Dunnottar, the seat of the Earl Marischal, by whom, according to his ancient privilege, they were kept. The castle was defended by George Ogilvie of Barra, who, apprehensive of the progress which the English made in reducing the strong places in Scotland, became anxious for the safety of these valuable memorials. The ingenuity of his lady had them conveyed out of the castle in a bag on a woman's back, among some *hards*, as they are called, of lint. They were carried to the Kirk of Kinneff, and intrusted to the care of the clergyman named Grainger, and his wife, and buried under the pulpit. The Castle of Dunnottar, though very strong and faithfully defended, was at length under necessity of surrendering, being the last strong place in Britain on which the royal flag floated in those calamitous times. Ogilvie and his lady were threatened with the utmost extremities by the Republican General Morgan, unless they should produce the Regalia. The Governor stuck to it that he knew nothing of them, as in fact they had been carried away without his knowledge. The lady maintained she had given them to John Keith, second son of the Earl Marischal, by whom, she said, they had been carried to France. They suffered a long imprisonment and much ill usage. On the Restoration, the old Countess Marischal, founding upon the story Mrs. Ogilvie had told to screen her husband, obtained for her own son, John Keith, the Earldom of Kintore, and the post of Knight Marischal, with £400 a year, as if he had been in truth the preserver of the Regalia. It soon proved that this reward had been too hastily given, for Ogilvie of Barra produced the Regalia, the honest clergyman refusing to deliver them to any one but those from whom he received them. Ogilvie was made a knight banneret, however, and got a new charter of the lands acknowledging the good service. Thus it happened oddly enough that Keith, who was abroad during the transaction, and had nothing to do with it, got the earldom, pension, &c., Ogilvie only inferior honours, and the poor clergyman nothing whatever, or, as we say, *the hare's foot to lick*. As for Ogilvie's lady, she died before the Restoration, her health being ruined

by the hardships she endured from the Cromwellian satellites. She was a Douglas, with all the high spirit of that proud family. On her death-bed, and not till then, she told her husband where the honours were concealed, charging him to suffer death rather than betray them. Popular tradition says, not very probably, that Grainger and his wife were *booted* (that is, tortured with the engine called the boots). I think the Knight Marischal's office rested in the Kintore family until 1715, when it was resumed on account of the Bearded Earl's accession to the insurrection of that year. He escaped well, for they might have taken his estate and his earldom. I must save post, however, and conclude abruptly. Yours ever,

"WALTER SCOTT."

On the 5th, after the foregoing letter had been written at the Clerks' table, Scott and several of his brother Commissioners revisited the castle, accompanied by some of the ladies of their families. His daughter tells me that her father's conversation had worked her feelings up to such a pitch, that when the lid was again removed, she nearly fainted, and drew back from the circle. As she was retiring, she was startled by his voice exclaiming, in a tone of the deepest emotion, "something between anger and despair," as she expresses it, "By G— No!" One of the Commissioners, not quite entering into the solemnity with which Scott regarded this business, had, it seems, made a sort of motion as if he meant to put the crown on the head of one of the young ladies near him, but the voice and aspect of the poet were more than sufficient to make the worthy gentleman understand his error; and respecting the enthusiasm with which he had not been taught to sympathize, he laid down the ancient diadem with an air of painful embarrassment. Scott whispered "Pray forgive me;" and turning round at the moment, observed his daughter deadly pale, and leaning by the door. He immediately drew her out of the room, and when the air had somewhat recovered her, walked with her across the Mound to Castle Street. "He never spoke all the way home," she says, "but every now and then I felt his arm tremble; and from that time I fancied he began to treat me more like a woman than a child. I thought he liked me better, too, than he had ever done before."

These little incidents may give some notion of the profound seriousness with which his imagination had invested this matter. I am obliged to add, that in the society of Edinburgh at the time, even in the highest Tory circles, it did not seem to awaken much even of curiosity—to say nothing of any deeper feeling; there was, however, a great excitement among the common people of the town, and a still greater among the peasantry, not only in the neighbourhood, but all over Scotland; and the Crown-room becoming, thenceforth, one of the established *lions* of a city much resorted to—moreover, by stranger tourists—was likely, on the most moderate scale of admission fee, to supply a revenue sufficient for remunerating responsible and respectable guardianship. "This post would, as Scott thought, be a very suitable one for his friend Captain Adam Ferguson, and he exerted all his zeal for that purpose. The Captain was appointed—his nomination, however, did not take place for some months after—and the postscript of a letter to the Duke of Buccleuch, dated May 14th, 1818, plainly indicates the interest on which

Scott mainly relied for its completion :—"If you happen," he writes, "to see Lord Melville, pray give him a jog about Ferguson's affair ; but, between ourselves, I depend chiefly on the kind offices of Willie Adam, who is an auld sneck-drawer." The Lord Chief Commissioner, at all times ready to lend Scott his influence with the Royal Family, had, on the present occasion, the additional motive of warm and hereditary personal regard for Ferguson.

It appears that he resumed, in the beginning of this year, his drama of *Devorgoil* ; his letters to Terry are of course full of that subject, but they contain, at the same time, many curious indications of his views and feelings as to theatrical affairs in general ; and mixed up with these a most characteristic record of the earnestness with which he now watched the interior fitting up, as he had in the season before the outward architecture, of the new edifice at Abbotsford. Meanwhile, he found leisure hours for various contributions to periodical works ; among others, an article on Kirkton's Church History, and another on (of all subjects in the world) *military bridges*, for the Quarterly Review ; a spirited version of the old German ballad on the Battle of Sempach, and a generous criticism on Mrs. Shelley's romance of *Frankenstein*, for Blackwood's Magazine. This being the first winter and spring of Laidlaw's establishment at Kaeside, communications as to the affairs of the farm were exchanged weekly whenever Scott was in Edinburgh, and they afford delightful evidence of that paternal solicitude for the well-being of his rural dependants, which all along kept pace with Scott's zeal as to the economical improvement and the picturesque adornment of his territories.

On the 12th of May, Scott left Abbotsford, for the summer session in Edinburgh.

At this moment, his position, take it for all in all, was, I am inclined to believe, what no other man had ever won for himself by the pen alone. His works were the daily food, not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe. His society was courted by whatever England could show of eminence. Station, power, wealth, beauty, and genius strove with each other in every demonstration of respect and worship—and, a few political fanatics and envious poetasters apart, wherever he appeared in town or in country, whoever had Scotch blood in him, "gentle or simple," felt it move more rapidly through his veins when he was in the presence of Scott. To descend to what many looked on as higher things, he considered himself, and was considered by all about him, as rapidly consolidating a large fortune :—the annual profits of his novels alone had, for several years, been not less than £10,000 ; his domains were daily increased ; his castle was rising ; and perhaps few doubted that ere long he might receive from the just favour of his Prince some distinction in the way of external rank, such as had seldom before been dreamt of as the possible consequence of a mere literary celebrity. It was about this time that the compiler of these pages first had the opportunity of observing the plain easy modesty which had survived the many temptations of such a career ; and the kindness of heart pervading, in all circumstances, his gentle deportment, which made him the rare, perhaps the solitary, example of a man signally elevated from humble beginnings, and loved

more and more by his earliest friends and connexions, in proportion as he had fixed on himself the homage of the great and the wonder of the world.

It was during the sitting of the General Assembly of the Kirk in May, 1818, that I first had the honour of meeting him in private society: the party was not a large one, at the house of a much-valued common friend—Mr. Home Drummond of Blair Drummond, the grandson of Lord Kames. Mr. Scott, ever apt to consider too favourably the literary efforts of others, and more especially of very young persons, received me, when I was presented to him, with a cordiality which I had not been prepared to expect from one filling a station so exalted. This, however, is the same story that every individual, who ever met him under similar circumstances, has had to tell. When the ladies retired from the dinner-table I happened to sit next him; and he, having heard that I had lately returned from a tour in Germany, made that country and its recent literature the subject of some conversation. In the course of it, I told him that when, on reaching the inn at Weimar, I asked the waiter whether Goethe was then in the town, the man stared as if he had not heard the name before; and that on my repeating the question, adding *Goethe der grosse dichter* (the great poet), he shook his head as doubtfully as before—until the landlady solved our difficulties, by suggesting that perhaps the traveller might mean “the *Herr Geheimer-Rath* (Privy-Counsellor) *Von Goethe*.” Scott seemed amused with this, and said, “I hope you will come one of these days and see me at Abbotsford; and when you reach Selkirk or Melrose, be sure you ask even the landlady for nobody but *the Sheriff*.” He appeared particularly interested when I described Goethe as I first saw him, alighting from a carriage crammed with wild plants and herbs, which he had picked up in the course of his morning’s botanizing among the hills above Jena. “I am glad,” said he, “that my old master has pursuits somewhat akin to my own. I am no botanist, properly speaking; and though a dweller on the banks of the Tweed, shall never be knowing about Flora’s beauties; \* but how I should like to have a talk with him about trees!” I mentioned how much any one must be struck with the majestic beauty of Goethe’s countenance—(the noblest certainly by far that I have ever yet seen).—“Well,” said he, “the grandest demigod I ever saw was Dr. Carlyle, minister of Musselburgh, commonly called *Jupiter Carlyle*, from having sat more than once for the king of gods and men to Gavin Hamilton—and a shrewd, clever old carle was he, no doubt, but no more a poet than his preceptor. As for poets, I have seen, I believe, all the best of our own time and country—and, though Burns had the most glorious eyes imaginable, I never thought any of them would come up to an artist’s notion of the character, except Byron.” A reverend gentleman present (I think, Principal Nicoll of St. Andrews) expressed his regret that he had never seen Lord Byron. “And the prints,” resumed Scott, “give one no impression of him—the lustre is there, Doctor, but it is not lighted up.

\* “What beauties does Flora disclose,  
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed,” &c.

Byron's countenance is *a thing to dream of*. A certain fair lady, whose name has been too often mentioned in connection with his, told a friend of mine that, when she first saw Byron it was in a crowded room, and she did not know who it was, but her eyes were instantly nailed, and she said to herself *that pale face is my fate*. And, poor soul, if a godlike face and godlike powers could have made any excuse for devilry, to be sure she had one." In the course of this talk, an old friend and schoolfellow of Scott's asked him across the table if he had any faith in the antique busts of Homer. "No, truly," he answered, smiling, "for if there had been either limners or stuccoers worth their salt in those days, the owner of such a headpiece would never have had to trail the poke. They would have alimented the honest man decently among them for a lay-figure."

A few days after this I received a communication from the Messrs. Ballantyne to the effect that Mr. Scott's various avocations had prevented him from fulfilling his agreement with them as to the historical department of the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1816, and that it would be acceptable to him as well as them if I could undertake to supply it in the course of the autumn. This proposal was agreed to on my part, and I had consequently occasion to meet him pretty often during that summer session. He told me that if the war had gone on he should have liked to do the historical summary as before; but that the prospect of having no events to record but Radical riots, and the passing or rejecting of corn bills and poor bills, sickened him; that his health was no longer what it had been; and that, though he did not mean to give over writing altogether—(here he smiled significantly, and glanced his eye towards a pile of MS. on the desk by him)—he thought himself now entitled to write nothing but what would rather be an amusement than a fatigue to him—"Juniore ad labores."

He at this time occupied as his *den* a small square room behind the dining parlour in Castle Street. It had but a single Venetian window, opening on a patch of turf not much larger than itself, and the aspect of the place was on the whole sombrous. The walls were entirely clothed with books, most of them folios and quartos, and all in that complete state of repair which at a glance reveals a tinge of bibliomania. A dozen volumes or so, needful for immediate purposes of reference, were placed close by him on a small movable frame, something like a dumb-waiter. All the rest were in their proper niches, and wherever a volume had been lent, its room was occupied by a wooden block of the same size, having a card with the name of the borrower and date of the loan tacked on its front. The old bindings had obviously been retouched and regilt in the most approved manner; the new, when the books were of any mark, were rich but never gaudy—a large proportion of blue morocco—all stamped with his *device* of the portcullis, and its motto, *Glaucus tutus ero*, being an anagram of his name in Latin. Every case and shelf was accurately lettered, and the works arranged systematically; history and biography on one side—poetry and the drama on another—law books and dictionaries behind his own chair. The only table was a massive piece of furniture which he had had constructed on the model of one at Rokeby, with a desk and all its appurtenances on either side, that an amanuensis might work opposite to him when he chose, and with small tiers of

drawers reaching all round to the floor. The top displayed a goodly array of session papers, and on the desk below were, besides the MS. at which he was working, sundry parcels of letters, proof-sheets, and so forth, all neatly done up with red tape. His own writing apparatus was a very handsome old box, richly carved, lined with crimson velvet, and containing ink-bottles, taper-stand, &c., in silver—the whole in such order that it might have come from the silversmith's window half an hour before. Besides his own huge elbow-chair, there were but two others in the room, and one of these seemed, from its position, to be reserved exclusively for the amanuensis.—I observed, during the first evening I spent with him in this *sanctum*, that while he talked his hands were hardly ever idle. Sometimes he folded letter-covers, sometimes he twisted paper into matches, performing both tasks with great mechanical expertness and nicety; and when there was no loose paper fit to be so dealt with, he snapped his fingers, and the noble Maida aroused himself from his lair on the hearth-rug, and laid his head across his master's knees, to be caressed and fondled. The room had no space for pictures except one, an original portrait of Claverhouse, which hung over the chimneypiece, with a Highland target on either side, and broadswords and dirks (each having its own story) disposed star-fashion round them. A few green tin boxes, such as solicitors keep title-deeds in, were piled over each other on one side of the window; and on the top of these lay a fox's tail, mounted on an antique silver handle, wherewith, as often as he had occasion to take down a book, he gently brushed the dust off the upper leaves before opening it. I think I have mentioned all the furniture of the room except a sort of ladder—low, broad, well carpeted, and strongly guarded with oaken rails—by which he helped himself to books from his higher shelves. On the top step of this convenience, Hinsel of Hinsfeldt (so called from one of the German *Kinder-märchen*), a venerable tom cat, fat and sleek, and no longer very locomotive, usually lay watching the proceedings of his master and Maida with an air of dignified equanimity; but when Maida chose to leave the party, he signified his inclinations by thumping the door with his huge paw as violently as ever, a fashionable footman handled a knocker in Grosvenor Square. The Sheriff rose and opened it for him with courteous alacrity, and then Hinsel came down purring from his perch, and mounted guard by the footstool, *vice* Maida absent upon furlough. Whatever discourse might be passing was broken, every now and then, by some affectionate apostrophe to these four-footed friends. He said they understood everything he said to them, and I believe they did understand a great deal of it. But at all events, dogs and cats, like children, have some infallible tact for discovering at once who is, and who is not, really fond of their company; and I venture to say Scott was never five minutes in any room before the little pets of the family, whether dumb or lisping, had found out his kindness for all their generation.

I never thought it lawful to keep a journal of what passes in private society, so that no one need expect from the sequel of this narrative any detailed record of Scott's familiar talk. What fragments of it have happened to adhere to a tolerably retentive memory, and may be put into black and white without wounding any feelings which my friend, were

he alive, would have wished to spare, I shall introduce as the occasion suggest or serves; but I disclaim on the threshold anything more than this; and I also wish to enter a protest once for all against the general fidelity of several literary gentlemen who have kindly forwarded to me private lucubrations of theirs, designed to *Boswellize* Scott, and which they may probably publish hereafter. To report conversation fairly, it is a necessary pre-requisite that we should be completely familiar with all the interlocutors, and understand thoroughly all their minutest relations, and points of common knowledge and common feeling with each other. He who does not, must be perpetually in danger of misinterpreting sportive allusion into serious statement; and the man who was only recalling, by some jocular phrase or half-phrase, to an old companion, some trivial reminiscence of their boyhood or youth, may be represented as expressing, upon some person or incident casually tabled, an opinion which he had never framed, or if he had, would never have given words to in any mixed assemblage—not even among what the world calls *friends* at his own board. In proportion as a man is witty and humorous, there will always be about him and his a widening maze and wilderness of cues and catchwords which the uninitiated will, if they are bold enough to try interpretation, construe, ever and anon, egregiously amiss—not seldom into arrant falsity. For this one reason, to say nothing of many others, I consider no man justified in journalizing what he sees and hears in a domestic circle where he is not thoroughly at home; and I think there are still higher and better reasons why he should not do so where he is.

Before I ever met Scott in private I had, of course, heard many people describe and discuss his style of conversation. Everybody seemed to agree that it overflowed with hearty good humour, as well as plain unaffected good sense and sagacity; but I had heard not a few persons of undoubted ability and accomplishment maintain that the genius of the great poet and novelist rarely, if ever, revealed itself in his talk. It is needless to say that the persons I allude to were all his own countrymen, and themselves imbued, more or less, with the conversational habits derived from a system of education in which the study of metaphysics occupies a very large share of attention. The best table talk of Edinburgh was, and probably still is, in a very great measure made up of brilliant disquisition, such as might be transferred without alteration to a professor's note-book or the pages of a critical review, and of sharp word-catchings, ingenious thrusting and parrying of dialectics, and all the quips and quibbles of bar pleading. It was the talk of a society to which lawyers and lecturers had for at least a hundred years given the tone. From the date of the Union Edinburgh ceased to be the head-quarters of the Scotch nobility, and long before the time of which I speak they had all but entirely abandoned it as a place of residence. I think I never knew above two or three of the peerage to have houses there at the same time, and these were usually among the poorest and most insignificant of their order. The wealthier gentry had followed their example. Very few of that class ever spent any considerable part of the year in Edinburgh, except for the purposes of educating their children, or superintending the progress of a lawsuit; and these were not more likely than

a score or two of comatose and lethargic old Indians, to make head against the established influences of academical and forensic celebrity. Now Scott's tastes and resources had not much in common with those who had inherited and preserved the chief authority in this provincial hierarchy of rhetoric. He was highly amused with watching their dexterous logomachies; but his delight in such displays arose mainly, I cannot doubt, from the fact of their being, both as to subject-matter and style and method, remote a *Scevolæ studius*. He sat by, as he would have done at a stage play or a fencing match, enjoying and applauding the skill exhibited, but without feeling much ambition to parade himself as a rival either of the foil or the buskin. I can easily believe, therefore, that in the earlier part of his life—before the blaze of universal fame had overawed local prejudice, and a new generation, accustomed to hear of that fame from their infancy, had grown up—it may have been the commonly adopted creed in Edinburgh that Scott, however distinguished otherwise, was not to be named as a table companion in the same day with this or that master of luminous dissertation or quick rejoinder, who now sleeps as forgotten as his grandmother. It was natural enough that persons brought up in the same circle with him, who remembered all his beginnings, and had but slowly learned to acquiesce in the justice of his claim to unrivalled honour in literature, should have clung all the closer for that late acquiescence to their original estimate of him as inferior to themselves in other titles to admiration. It was also natural that their prejudice on that score should be readily taken up by the young aspirants who breathed, as it were, the atmosphere of their professional renown. Perhaps, too, Scott's steady Toryism, and the effect of his genius and example in modifying the intellectual sway of the long dominant Whigs in the north, may have had some share in this matter. However all that may have been, the substance of what I had been accustomed to hear certainly was, that Scott had a marvellous stock of queer stories, which he often told with happy effect, but that, bating these drafts on a portentous memory, set off with a simple old-fashioned *naïveté* of humour and pleasantry, his strain of talk was remarkable neither for depth of remark nor for felicity of illustration; that his views and opinions on the most important topics of practical interest were hopelessly perverted by his blind enthusiasm for the dreams of bygone ages; and that, but for the grotesque phenomenon presented by a great writer of the nineteenth century gravely uttering sentiments worthy of his own Dundees and Invernahyles, the main texture of his discourse would be pronounced by any enlightened member of modern society rather bald and poor than otherwise. I think the epithet most in vogue was *common-place*.

It will easily be believed, that, in companies such as I have been alluding to, made up of or habitually domineered over by voluble Whigs and political economists, Scott was often tempted to put forth his Tory doctrines and antiquarian prejudices in an exaggerated shape—in colours, to say the truth, altogether different from what they assumed under other circumstances, or which had any real influence upon his mind and conduct on occasions of practical moment. But I fancy it will seem equally credible that the most sharp-sighted of these social critics may not

always have been capable of tracing, and doing justice to, the powers which Scott brought to bear upon the topics which they, not he, had chosen for discussion. In passing from a gas-lit hall into a room with wax candles, the guests sometimes complain that they have left splendour for gloom ; but let them try by what sort of light it is most satisfactory to read, write, or embroider, or consider at leisure under which of the two either men or women look their best.

The strongest, purest, and least observed of all lights is, however, daylight ; and his talk was commonplace, just as sunshine is, which gilds the most indifferent objects, and adds brilliancy to the brightest. As for the old-world anecdotes which these clever persons were condescending enough to laugh at as pleasant extravagances, serving merely to relieve and set off the main stream of debate, they were often enough, it may be guessed, connected with the theme in hand by links not the less apt that they might be too subtle to catch their bedazzled and self-satisfied optics. There might be keener knowledge of human nature than was "dreamt of in their philosophy"—which passed with them for commonplace only because it was clothed in plain familiar household words, not dressed up in some pedantic masquerade of antithesis. "There are people," says Landor, "who think they write and speak finely, merely because they have forgotten the language in which their fathers and mothers used to talk to them ;" and surely there are a thousand homely old proverbs, which many a dainty modern would think it beneath his dignity to quote either in speech or writing, any one of which condenses more wit (take that word in any of its senses) than could be extracted from all that was ever said or written by the *doctrinaires* of the Edinburgh school. Many of those gentlemen held Scott's conversation to be commonplace exactly for the same reason that a child thinks a perfectly limpid stream, though perhaps deep enough to drown it three times over, must needs be shallow. Put it will be easily believed that the best and highest of their own idols had better means and skill of measurement : I can never forget the pregnant expression of one of the ablest of that school and party, Lord Cockburn, who, when some glib youth chanced to echo in his hearing the consolatory tenet of local mediocrity, answered quietly, "I have the misfortune to think differently from you : in my humble opinion Walter Scott's *sense* is a still more wonderful thing than his *genius*."

Indeed, I have no sort of doubt that, long before 1818, full justice was done to Scott, even in these minor things, by all those of his Edinburgh acquaintance, whether Whig or Tory, on whose personal opinion he could have been supposed to set much value. With few exceptions, the really able lawyers of his own or nearly similar standing had ere that time attained stations of judicial dignity, or were in the springtime of practice, and in either case they were likely to consider general society much in his own fashion, as the joyous relaxation of life, rather than the theatre of exertion and display. Their tables were elegantly, some of them sumptuously spread, and they lived in a pretty constant interchange of entertainments upon a large scale, in every circumstance of which, conversation included, it was their ambition to imitate those voluptuous metropolitan circles wherein most of them had from time to time mingled, and several of them with

distinguished success. Among such prosperous gentlemen, like himself past the *mezzo cammin*, Scott's picturesque anecdotes, rich easy humour, and gay involuntary glances of mother-wit were, it is not difficult to suppose, appreciated above contributions of a more ambitious stamp, and no doubt his London *reputation de salon* (which had by degrees risen to a high pitch, although he cared nothing for it) was not without its effect in Edinburgh. But still the old prejudice lingered on in the general opinion of the place, especially among the smart praters of the *Outer House*, whose glimpses of the social habits of their superiors were likely to be rare, and their gall-bladders to be more distended than their purses.

In truth it was impossible to listen to Scott's oral narrations, whether gay or serious, or to the felicitous fun with which he parried absurdities of all sorts, without discovering better qualities in his talk than *wit*—and of a higher order. I mean, especially, a power of *vivid painting*; the true and primary sense of what is called *Imagination*. He was like Jacques, though not a "Melancholy Jacques," and "moralized" a common topic "into a thousand similitudes." Shakespeare and the banished Duke would have found him "full of matter." He disliked mere disquisitions in Edinburgh, and prepared *impromptus* in London; and puzzled the promoters of such things, sometimes by placid silence, sometimes by broad merriment. To such men he seemed *commonplace*—not so to the most dexterous masters in what was to some of them almost a science; not so to Rose, Hallam, Moore, or Rogers; to Ellis, Mackintosh, Croker, or Canning.

Scott managed to give and receive such great dinners as I have been alluding to, at least as often as any other private gentleman in Edinburgh; but he very rarely accompanied his wife and daughters to the evening assemblies which commonly ensued under other roofs, for *early to rise*, unless in the case of spare-fed anchorites, takes for granted *early to bed*. When he had no dinner engagement, he frequently gave a few hours to the theatre; but still more frequently, when the weather was fine, and still more, I believe, to his own satisfaction, he drove out with some of his family, or a single friend, in an open carriage; the favourite rides being either to the Blackford Hills, or to Ravelston, and so home by Corstorphine; or to the beach of Portobello, where *Peter* was always instructed to keep his horses as near as possible to the sea. More than once, even in the first summer of my acquaintance with him, I had the pleasure of accompanying him on these evening excursions; and never did he seem to enjoy himself more fully than when placidly surveying at such sunset or moonlight hours, either the massive outlines of his "own romantic town," or the tranquil expanse of its noble estuary. He delighted, too, in passing, when he could, through some of the quaint windings of the ancient city itself, now deserted, except at midday, by the upper world. How often have I seen him go a long way round about rather than miss the opportunity of halting for a few minutes on the vacant esplanade of Holyrood, or under the darkest shadows of the Castle rock, where it overhangs the Grassmarket, and the huge slab that still marks where the gibbet of Porteous and the Covenanters had its station. His coachman knew him too well to move at a Jehu's pace amidst such scenes as these. No funeral hearse crept more leisurely

than did his landau up the Canongate or the Cowgate; and not a queer tottering gable but recalled to him some long-buried memory of splendour or bloodshed, which by a few words he set before the hearer in the reality of life. His image is so associated in my mind with the antiquities of his native place, that I cannot now revisit them without feeling as if I were treading on his gravestone.

Whatever might happen on the other evenings of the week, he always lined at home on Sunday, and usually some few friends were then with him, but never any person with whom he stood on ceremony. These were, it may readily be supposed, the most agreeable of his entertainments. He came into the room rubbing his hands, his face bright and gleesome, like a boy arriving at home for the holidays, his Peppers and Mustards gambolling about his heels, and even the stately Maida grinning and wagging his tail in sympathy. Among the most regular guests on these happy evenings were, in my time, as had long before been the case, Mrs. Maclean Clephane of Torloisk (with whom he agreed cordially on all subjects except the authenticity of Ossian), and her daughters, whose guardian he had become, at their own choice. The eldest of them had been for some years married to the Earl Compton (now Marquis of Northampton), and was of course seldom in the north; but the others had much of the same tastes and accomplishments which so highly distinguished the late Lady Northampton, and Scott delighted especially in their proficiency in the poetry and music of their native isles. Mr. and Mrs. Skene of Rubislaw were frequent attendants; and so were the Macdonald-Buchanans of Drumakiln, whose eldest daughter, Isabella, was his chief favourite among all his *nieces* of the Clerks' table—as was, among the *nephews*, my own dear friend and companion, Joseph Hume, a singularly graceful young man, rich in the promise of hereditary genius, but, alas! cut off in the early bloom of his days. The well-beloved Erskine was seldom absent, and very often Terry or James Ballantyne came with him, sometimes, though less frequently, Constable. Among other persons who now and then appeared at these “dinners without the silver dishes,” as Scott called them, I may mention (to say nothing of such old cronies as Mr. Clerk, Mr. Thomson, and Mr. Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, who had all his father *Boszy's* cleverness, good humour, and joviality, without one touch of his meaner qualities,—wrote *Jenny dang the Weaver*, and some other popular songs, which he sang capitally, and was moreover a thorough bibliomaniac; the late Sir Alexander Don of Newton, in all courteous and elegant accomplishments the model of a cavalier; and last, not least, William Allan, R.A., who had shortly before this time returned to Scotland from several years of travel in Russia and Turkey. At one of these plain hearty dinners, however, the company rarely exceeded three or four, besides the as yet undivided family.

Scott had a story of a topping Goldsmith on the Bridge who prided himself on being the mirror of Amphitryons, and accounted for his success by stating that it was his invariable custom to set his own stomach at ease, by a beef-steak and a pint of port in his back shop, half an hour before the arrival of his guests. But the host of Castle Street had no occasion to imitate this prudent arrangement, for his appetite at dinner

was neither keen nor nice. Breakfast was his chief meal. Before that came he had gone through the severest part of his day's work, and he then set to with the zeal of Crabbe's Squire Tovell—

“And laid at once a pound upon his plate.”

No foxhunter ever prepared himself for the field by more substantial appliances. His table was always provided, in addition to the usually plentiful delicacies of a Scotch breakfast, with some solid article, on which he did most lusty execution—a round of beef—a pasty, such as made Gil Blas's eyes water—or, most welcome of all, a cold sheep's head, the charms of which primitive dainty he has so gallantly defended against the disparaging sneers of Dr. Johnson and his bear-leader.\* A huge brown loaf flanked his elbow, and it was placed upon a broad wooden trencher, that he might cut and come again with the bolder knife. Often did the *Clerks' coach*, commonly called among themselves *the Lively*—which trundled round every morning to pick up the brotherhood, and then deposited them at the proper minute in the Parliament Close—often did this lumbering hackney arrive at his door before he had fully appeased what Homer calls “the sacred rage of hunger;” and voracious was the merriment of the learned *uncles*, when the surprised poet swung forth to join them, with an extemporized sandwich, that looked like a ploughman's luncheon, in his hand. But this robust supply would have served him in fact for the day. He never tasted anything more before dinner, and at dinner he ate almost as sparingly as Squire Tovell's niece from the boarding-school—

—“Who cut the sanguine flesh in frustums fine,  
And marvelled much to see the creatures dine.”

The only dishes he was at all fond of were the old-fashioned ones, to which he had been accustomed in the days of Saunders Fairford, and which really are excellent dishes,—such, in truth, as Scotland borrowed from France before Catherine de Medicis brought in her Italian *virtuosi* to revolutionize the kitchen like the Court. Of most of these, I believe, he has in the course of his novels found some opportunity to record his esteem. But, above all, who can forget that his King Jamie, amidst the splendours of Whitehall, thinks himself an ill-used monarch unless his first-course includes *cockyleekie*?

It is a fact, which some philosophers may think worth setting down, that Scott's organization, as to more than one of the senses, was the reverse of exquisite. He had very little of what musicians call an ear; his smell was hardly more delicate. I have seen him stare about, quite unconscious of the cause, when his whole company betrayed their uneasiness at the approach of an overkept haunch of venison; and neither by the nose nor the palate could he distinguish corked wine from sound. He could never tell Madeira from sherry—nay, an Oriental friend having sent him a butt of *sheeraz*, when he remembered the circumstance some time afterwards, and called for a bottle to have Sir John Malcolm's opinion of its quality, it turned out that his butler, mistaking the label, had already served up half the binn as *sherry*. Port he considered as

\* See Croker's Boswell (edit. 1831), vol. ii. p. 38.

physic: He never willingly swallowed more than one glass of it, and was sure to anathematize a second, if offered, by repeating John Home's epigram—

“Bold and erect the Caledonian stood,  
Old was his mutton, and his claret good;  
Let him drink port, the English statesman cried—  
He drank the poison, and his spint died.”

In truth, he liked no wines except sparkling champagne and claret; but even as to this last he was no connoisseur; and sincerely preferred a tumbler of whisky-toddy to the most precious “liquid ruby” that ever flowed in the cup of a prince. He rarely took any other potation when quite alone with his family; but at the Sunday board he circulated the champagne briskly during dinner, and considered a pint of claret each man's fair share afterwards. I should not omit, however, that his Bordeaux was uniformly preceded by a small libation of the genuine *mountain dew*, which he poured with his own hand, *more majorum*, for each guest—making use for the purpose of such a multifarious collection of ancient Highland *quavags* (little cups of curiously dovetailed wood, inlaid with silver) as no Lowland sideboard but his was ever equipped with; but commonly reserving for himself one that was peculiarly precious in his eyes, as having travelled from Edinburgh to Derby in the canteen of Prince Charlie. This relic had been presented to “the wandering Ascanius” by some very careful follower, for its bottom is of glass, that he who quaffed might keep his eye the while upon the dirk hand of his companion.

The sound of music—even, I suspect, of any sacred music but psalm-singing—would be considered indecorous in the streets of Edinburgh on a Sunday night; so, upon the occasions I am speaking of, the harp was silent, and “Otterburne” and “The Bonny House of Airlie” must needs be dispensed with. To make amends, after tea in the drawing-room, Scott usually read some favourite author, for the amusement of his little circle; or Erskine, Ballantyne, or Terry did so, at his request. He himself read aloud high poetry with far greater simplicity, depth, and effect, than any other man I ever heard; and, in Macbeth or Julius Cæsar, or the like, I doubt if Kemble could have been more impressive. Yet the changes of intonation were so gently managed, that he contrived to set the different interlocutors clearly before us, without the least approach to theatrical artifice. Not so the others I have mentioned: they all read cleverly and agreeably, but with the decided trickery of stage recitation. To them he usually gave the book when it was a comedy, or, indeed, any other drama than Shakespeare's or Joanna Baillie's. Dryden's Fables; Johnson's two satires, and certain detached scenes of Beaumont and Fletcher, especially that in the Lover's Progress, where the ghost of the musical innkeeper makes his appearance, were frequently selected. Of the poets, his contemporaries, however, there was not one that did not come in for his part. In Wordsworth, his pet pieces were, I think, the Song for Brougham Castle, the Laodamia, and some of the early sonnets; in Southey, Queen Orraca, Fernando Ramirez, the Lines on the Holly Tree; and, of his larger poems, the Thalaba. Crabbe was perhaps, next to Shakespeare, the standing resource; but in those days Byron was pouring out his spirit fresh and

full; and, if a new piece from his hand had appeared, it was sure to be read by Scott the Sunday evening afterwards, and that with such delighted emphasis, as showed how completely the elder bard had kept all his enthusiasm for poetry at the pitch of youth, all his admiration of genius free, pure, and unstained by the least drop of literary jealousy. Rare and beautiful example of a happily constituted and virtuously disciplined mind and character!

Very often something read aloud by himself or his friends suggested an old story of greater compass than would have suited a dinner-table—and he told it, whether serious or comical, or, as more frequently happened, part of both, exactly in every respect in the tone and style of the notes and illustrations to his novels. A great number of his best oral narratives have, indeed, been preserved in those parting lucubrations; and not a few in his letters. Yet very many there were of which his pen has left no record—so many, that, were I to task my memory, I could, I believe, recall the outlines at least of more than would be sufficient to occupy a couple of thick volumes. Possibly, though well aware how little justice I could do to such things, rather than think of their perishing for ever, and leaving not even a shadow behind, I may at some future day hazard the attempt.

Let me turn, meanwhile, to some dinner-tables very different from his own, at which, from this time forward, I often met Scott. It is very true of the societies I am about to describe, that he was "among them, not of them;" and it is also most true that this fact was apparent in all the demeanour of his bibliopolical and typographical allies towards him whenever he visited them under their roofs—not a bit less so than when they were received at his own board; but still, considering how closely his most important worldly affairs were connected with the personal character of the Ballantynes, I think it a part, though neither a proud nor a very pleasing part, of my duty as his biographer, to record my reminiscences of them and their doings in some detail.

James Ballantyne then lived in St. John Street, a row of good, old-fashioned, and spacious houses, adjoining the Canongate and Holyrood, and at no great distance from his printing establishment. He had married a few years before the daughter of a wealthy farmer in Berwickshire—a quiet, amiable woman, of simple manners and perfectly domestic habits: a group of fine young children were growing up about him; and he usually, if not constantly, had under his roof his aged mother, his and his wife's tender care of whom it was most pleasing to witness. As far as a stranger might judge, there could not be a more exemplary household, or a happier one; and I have occasionally met the poet in St. John Street when there were no other guests but Erskine, Terry, George Hogarth,\* and another intimate friend or two, and when James Ballantyne was content to appear in his own true and best colours,—the kind head of his family, the respectful but honest schoolfellow of Scott, the easy landlord of a plain, comfortable table. But when any great event was about to take place in the business, especially on the eve of a new novel,

\* George Hogarth, Esq., W.S., brother of Mrs. James Ballantyne. This gentleman is now well known in the literary world, especially by a *History of Music*, of which all who understand that science speak highly.

there were doings of a higher strain in St. John Street ; and to be present at one of those scenes was truly a rich treat, even—if not especially—for persons who, like myself, had no more *knowledge* than the rest of the world as to the authorship of *Waverley*. Then were congregated about the printer all his own literary allies, of whom a considerable number were by no means personally familiar with “THE GREAT UNKNOWN;”—who, by the way, owed to him that widely adopted title;—and *he* appeared among the rest with his usual open aspect of buoyant good-humour—although it was not difficult to trace, in the occasional play of his features, the diversion it afforded him to watch all the procedure of his swelling confidant, and the curious neophytes that surrounded the well-spread board.

The feast was, to use one of James's own favourite epithets, *gorgeous*; an aldermanic display of turtle and venison, with the suitable accompaniments of iced punch, potent ale, and generous Madeira. When the cloth was drawn the burley preses arose, with all he could muster of the port of John Kemble, and spouted with a sonorous voice the formula of Macbeth—

“Fill full !

I drink to the general joy of the whole table !”

This was followed by “the King, God bless him !” and second came—“Gentlemen, there is another toast which never has been nor shall be omitted in this house of mine—I give you the health of Mr. Walter Scott, with three times three !” All honour having been done to this health, and Scott having briefly thanked the company with some expressions of warm affection to their host, Mrs. Ballantyne retired ; the bottles passed round twice or thrice in the usual way ; and then James rose once more, every vein on his brow distended, his eyes solemnly fixed upon vacancy, to propose, not as before in his stentorian key, but with “bated breath,” in the sort of whisper by which a stage conspirator thrills the gallery—“*Gentlemen, a bumper to the immortal Author of Waverley !*”—The uproar of cheering, in which Scott made a fashion of joining, was succeeded by deep silence, and then Ballantyne proceeded—

“In his Lord-Burleigh-look, serene and serious,  
A something of imposing and mysterious”—

to lament the obscurity in which his illustrious but too modest correspondent still chose to conceal himself from the plaudits of the world—to thank the company for the manner in which the *nomine's umbra* had been received—and to assure them that the author of *Waverley* would, when informed of the circumstance, feel highly delighted—“the proudest hour of his life,” &c., &c. The cool demure fun of Scott's features during all this mummery was perfect ; and Erskine's attempt at a gay *nonchalance* was still more ludicrously meritorious. Aldiborontiphoscophornio, however, bursting as he was, knew too well to allow the new novel to be made the subject of discussion. Its name was announced, and success to it crowned another cup ; but after that no more of Jedediah. To cut the thread, he rolled out unbidden some one of his many theatrical songs, in a style that would have done no dishonour to almost any orchestra—“The Maid of Lodi,” or, perhaps, “The Bay of Biscay, oh !”—or, “The sweet little

cherub that sits up aloft." Other toasts followed, interspersed with ditties from other performers; old George Thomson, the friend of Burns, was ready for one with "The Moorland Wedding," or, "Willie brew'd a peck o' maut;"—and so it went on, until Scott and Erskine, with any clerical or very staid personage that had chanced to be admitted, saw fit to withdraw. Then the scene was changed. The claret and olives made way for broiled bones and a mighty bowl of punch; and when a few glasses of the hot beverage had restored his powers, James opened *ore rotundo* on the merits of the forthcoming romance. "One chapter—one chapter only"—was the cry. After "Nay, by'r Lady, nay!" and a few more coy shifts, the proof-sheets were at length produced, and James, with many a prefatory hem, read aloud what he considered as the most striking dialogue they contained.

The first I heard so read was the interview between Jeanie Deans, the Duke of Argyle, and Queen Caroline, in Richmond Park; and notwithstanding some spice of the pompous tricks to which he was addicted, I must say he did the unimitable scene great justice. At all events, the effect it produced was deep and memorable, and no wonder that the exulting typographer's *one bumper more to Jedediah Cleishbotham* preceded his parting stave, which was uniformly "The Last Words of Marmion," executed certainly with no contemptible rivalry of Braham.

What a different affair was a dinner, although probably including many of the same guests, at the junior partner's. He in those days retained, I think, no private apartments attached to his auction-rooms in Hanover Street, over the door of which he still kept emblazoned "John Ballantyne and Company, Booksellers." At any rate, such of his entertainments as I ever saw Scott partake of, were given at his villa near to the Frith of Forth, by Trinity; a retreat which the little man had named "Harmony Hall," and invested with an air of dainty voluptuous finery, contrasting strikingly enough with the substantial citizen-like snugness of his elder brother's domestic appointments. His house was surrounded by gardens so contrived as to seem of considerable extent, having many a shady tuft, trellised alley, and mysterious alcove, interspersed among their bright parterres. It was a fairy-like labyrinth, and there was no want of pretty *Armidas*, such as they might be, to glide half-seen among its mazes. The sitting-rooms opened upon gay and perfumed conservatories, and John's professional excursions to Paris and Brussels in quest of objects of *virtu* had supplied both the temptation and the means to set forth the interior in a fashion that might have satisfied the most fastidious *petite maîtresse* of Norwood or St. Denis. John too was a married man: he had, however, erected for himself a private wing, the accesses to which, whether from the main building or the bosquet, were so narrow that it was physically impossible for the handsome and portly lady who bore his name to force her person through any one of them. His dinners were in all respects Parisian, for his wasted palate disdained such John Bull luxuries as were all-in-all with James. The piquant pasty of Strasburgh or Perigord was never to seek; and even the *pièce de résistance* was probably a boar's head from Coblenz, or a turkey ready stuffed with truffles from the Palais Royal. The pictures scattered among John's innumerable mirrors were chiefly of theatrical subjects—many of them portraits of beautiful actresses

—the same Peg Woffingtons, Bellamys, Kitty Clives, and so forth, that found their way in the sequel to Charles Matthews's gallery at Highgate. Here that exquisite comedian's own mimicries and parodies were the life and soul of many a festival, and here, too, he gathered from his facetious host not a few of the richest materials for his *at homes* and *monopolylogues*. But, indeed, whatever actor or singer of eminence visited Edinburgh, of the evenings when he did not perform several were sure to be reserved for Trinity. Here Braham quavered, and here Liston drolled his best—here Johnstone, and Murray, and Yates, mixed jest and stave—here Kean revelled and rioted—and here the Roman Kemble often played the Greek from sunset to dawn. Nor did the popular *cantatrice* or *danseuse* of the time disdain to freshen her roses, after a laborious week, amidst these Paphian arbours of Harmony Hall.

Johnny had other tastes that were equally expensive. He had a well-furnished stable, and followed the foxhounds whenever the cover was within an easy distance. His horses were all called after heroes in Scott's poems or novels, and at this time he usually rode up to his auction on a tall milk-white hunter, yclept *Old Mortality*, attended by a leash or two of grayhounds,—Die Vernon, Jennie Dennison, and so forth, by name. The featherweight himself appeared uniformly, hammer in hand, in the half-dress of some sporting club, a light grey frock, with emblems of the chase on its silver buttons, white cord breeches, and jockey boots in Meltonian order, yet he affected in the pulpit rather a grave address, and was really one of the most plausible and imposing of the Puff tribe. Probably Scott's presence overawed his ludicrous propensities; for the poet was, when sales were going on, almost a daily attendant in Hanover Street, and himself not the least energetic of the numerous competitors for Johnny's uncouth *fifteeners*, Venetian lamps, Milanese cuirasses, and old Dutch cabinets. Maida, by the way, was so well aware of his master's habits, that about the time when the Court of Session was likely to break up for the day, he might usually be seen couched in expectation among Johnny's own *tail* of grayhounds at the threshold of the mart.

It was at one of those Trinity dinners this summer that I first saw Constable. Being struck with his appearance, I asked Scott who he was, and he told me—expressing some surprise that anybody should have lived a winter or two in Edinburgh without knowing, by sight at least, a citizen whose name was so familiar to the world. I happened to say that I had not been prepared to find the great bookseller a man of such gentlemanlike and even distinguished bearing. Scott smiled and answered, "Ay, Constable is indeed a grand-looking chield. He puts me in mind of Fielding's apology for Lady Booby—to wit, that Joseph Andrews had an air which, to those who had not seen many noblemen, would give an idea of nobility." I had not in those days been much initiated in the private jokes of what is called, by way of excellence, *the trade*, and was puzzled when Scott in the course of the dinner said to Constable, "Will your Czarish Majesty do me the honour to take a glass of champagne?" I asked the master of the feast for an explanation. "Oh!" said he, "are you so green as not to know that Constable long since dubbed himself *The Czar of Muscovy*, John Murray *The Emperor of the West*, and Longman and his string of partners *The Divan*?" "And

what title," I asked, "has Mr. John Ballantyne himself found in this new *almanac imperial*?" "Let that flea stick to the wa!" quoth Johnny. "When I set up for a bookseller, the Crafty christened me *The Dey of Alljeers*; but he now considers me as next thing to dethroned." He added, "His Majesty the Autocrat is too fond of these nicknames. One day a partner of the house of Longman was dining with him in the country, to settle an important piece of business, about which there occurred a good deal of difficulty. 'What fine swans you have in your pond there,' said the Londoner, by way of parenthesis. 'Swans!' cried Constable, 'they are only geese, man. There are just five of them, if you please to observe, and their names are Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown.' This skit cost the Crafty a good bargain."

It always appeared to me that James Ballantyne felt his genius rebuked in the presence of Constable; his manner was constrained, his smile servile, his hilarity elaborate. Not so with Johnny: the little fellow never seemed more airily frolicsome than when he capered for the amusement of the Czar.\* I never, however, saw those two together where I am told the humours of them both were exhibited to the richest advantage—I mean at the Sunday dinners with which Constable regaled, among others, his own circle of literary serfs, and when "Jocund Johnny" was very commonly his croupier. There are stories enough of practical jokes upon such occasions, some of them near akin to those which the author of *Humphrey Clinker* has thought fit to record of his own suburban villa, in the most diverting of young Melford's letters to Sir Watkin Philips. I have heard, for example, a luculent description of poor Elshender Campbell, and another drudge of the same class, running a race after dinner for a new pair of breeches, which Mr. David Bridges, tailor in ordinary to this northern potentate—himself a wit, a virtuoso, and the croupier on that day in lieu of Rigdum—had been instructed to bring with him, and display before the threadbare rivals. But I had these pictures from John Ballantyne, and I daresay they might be overcharged. That Constable was a most bountiful and generous patron to the ragged tenants of Grub Street there can, however, be no doubt; and as little that John himself acted on all occasions by them in the same spirit, and this to an extent greatly beyond what prudence (if he had ever consulted that guide in anything) would have dictated.

When I visited Constable, as I often did at a period somewhat later than that of which I now speak, and for the most part in company with Scott, I found the bookseller established in a respectable country gentleman's seat, some six or seven miles out of Edinburgh, and doing the honours of it with all the ease that might have been looked for had he been the long-descended owner of the place. There was no foppery, no show, no idle luxury, but to all appearance the plain abundance and simple enjoyment of hereditary wealth. His conversation was manly and vigorous, abounding in Scotch anecdotes of the old time, which he

\* "Now, John," cried Constable one evening after he had told one of his best stories, "now John, is that true?" His object evidently was, in Iago's phrase, to let down the pegs; but Rigdum answered gaily "True, indeed!" Not one word of it—any blockhead may stick to truth, my hearty but 'tis a sad hamperer of genius."

told with a degree of spirit and humour only second to his great author's. No man could more effectually control, when he had a mind, either the extravagant vanity which, on too many occasions, made him ridiculous, or the despotic temper which habitually held in fear and trembling all such as were in any sort dependent on his Czarish Majesty's pleasure. In him I never saw (at this period) anything but the unobtrusive sense and the calm courtesy of a well-bred gentleman. His very equipage kept up the series of contrasts between him and the two Ballantynes. Constable went back and forward between the town and Polton in a deep-hung and capacious green brouche, without any pretence at heraldic blazonry, drawn by a pair of sleek, black, long-tailed horses, and conducted by a grave old coachman in plain blue livery. The printer of the Canongate drove himself and his wife about the streets and suburbs in a snug machine, which did not overburden one powerful and steady cob; while the gay auctioneer, whenever he left the saddle for the box, mounted a bright blue dog-cart, and rattled down the Newhaven road with two high-mettled steeds prancing tandem before him, and most probably—especially if he was on his way to the races at Musselburgh—with some "sweet singer of Israel" flaming, with all her feathers, beside him. On such occasions, by-the-bye, Johnny sometimes had a French horn with him, and he played on it with good skill, and with an energy by no means prudent in the state of his lungs.

Why did Scott persist in mixing up all his most important concerns with such people as I have been describing? I asked himself that question too unceremoniously at a long subsequent period, and in due time the reader shall see the answer I received. But it left the main question, to my apprehension, as much in the dark as ever. I shall return to the sad subject hereafter more seriously; but in the meantime let it suffice to say that he was the most patient, long-suffering, affectionate, and charitable of mankind; that in the case of both the Ballantynes he could count, after all, on a sincerely, nay, a passionately devoted attachment to his person; that with the greatest of human beings use is an all but unconquerable power, and that he who so loftily tossed aside the seemingly most dangerous assaults of flattery, the blandishment of dames, the condescension of princes, the enthusiasm of crowds, had still his weak point upon which two or three humble besiegers, and one unwearied though most frivolous underminer, well knew how to direct their approaches. It was a favourite saw of his own that the wisest of our race often reserve the average stock of folly to be all expended upon some one flagrant absurdity.

Hoping to be forgiven for a long digression, the biographer willingly returns to the thread of Scott's story. The *Heart of Midlothian* appeared before the close of June, 1818; and among the letters which he received soon afterwards from the friends by this time in the secret, there is one which (though I do not venture to name the writer) I am tempted to take the liberty of quoting:—

" . . . . . Now for it . . . . I can speak to the purpose, as I have not only read it myself, but am in a house where everybody is tearing it out of each other's hands, and talking of nothing else. So much for its success—the more flattering because it overcomes a prejudice.

People were beginning to say the author would wear himself out ; it was going on too long in the same key, and no striking notes could possibly be produced. On the contrary, I think the interest is stronger here than in any of the former ones—(always excepting my first love Waverley)—and one may congratulate you upon having effected what many have tried to do, and nobody yet succeeded in, making the perfectly good character the most interesting. Of late days, especially since it has been the fashion to write moral and even religious novels, one might almost say of some of the wise good heroines, what a lively girl once said to \* \* \* \* of her well-meaning aunt, ‘Upon my word she is enough to make anybody wicked.’ And though beauty and talents are heaped on the right side, the writer, in spite of himself, is sure to put agreeableness on the wrong ; the person from whose errors he means you should take warning, runs away with your secret partiality in the meantime. Had this very story been conducted by a common hand, Effie would have attracted all our concern and sympathy, Jeanie only cold approbation. Whereas Jeanie without youth, beauty, genius, warm passions, or any other novel-perfection, is here our object from beginning to end. This is ‘enlisting the affections in the cause of virtue’ ten times more than ever Richardson did ; for whose male and female pedants, all-excelling as they are, I never could care half so much as I found myself inclined to do for Jeanie before I finished the first volume.

“You know I tell you my opinion just as I should do to a third person, and I trust the freedom is not unwelcome. I was a little tired of your Edinburgh lawyers in the introduction ; English people in general will be more so, as well as impatient of the passages alluding to Scotch law throughout. Mr. Saddletree will not entertain them. The latter part of the fourth volume unavoidably flags to a certain degree ; after Jeanie is happily settled at Roseneath, we have no more to wish for. But the chief fault I have to find relates to the reappearance and shocking fate of the boy. I hear on all sides, ‘Oh, I do not like that !’ I cannot say what I would have had instead, but I do not like it either ; it is a lame, huddled conclusion. I know you so well in it, by-the-bye !—you grow tired yourself, want to get rid of the story, and hardly care how. Sir George Staunton finishes his career very fitly ; he ought not to die in his bed, and for Jeanie’s sake one would not have him hanged. It is unnatural, though, that he should ever have gone within twenty miles of the Tolbooth, or shown his face in the streets of Edinburgh, or dined at a public meeting, if the Lord Commissioner had been his brother. Here ends my *per contra* account. The opposite page would make my letter too long, if I entered equally into particulars. Carlisle and Corby Castles in Waverley did not affect me more deeply than the prison and trial-scenes. The end of poor Madge Wildfire is also most pathetic. The meeting at Muschat’s Cairn tremendous. Dumbiedykes and Rory Bean are delightful. And I shall own that my prejudices were secretly gratified by the light in which you place John of Argyle, whom Mr. Coxo so ran down to please Lord Orford. You have drawn him to the very life. I heard so much of him in my youth, so many anecdotes, so often ‘as the Duke of Argyle used to say’—that I really believe I am almost as good a judge as if I had seen and lived with him. The late Lady

\*\*\*\*\* told me that when she married he was still remarkably handsome, with manners more graceful and engaging than she ever saw in any one else—the most agreeable person in conversation, the best teller of a story. When fifty-seven thus captivates eighteen, the natural powers of pleasing must be extraordinary. You have likewise coloured Queen Caroline exactly right; but I was bred up in another creed about Lady Suffolk, of whom, as a very old deaf woman, I have some faint recollection. Lady \*\*\*\*\* knew her intimately, and never would allow she had been the King's mistress, though she owned it was currently believed. She said he had just enough liking for her to make the Queen very civil to her, and very jealous and spiteful; the rest remained always uncertain at most, like a similar scandal in our days, where I, for one, imagine love and seeming influence on one side, and love of lounging, of an easy house and a good dinner on the other, to be all the criminal passions concerned. However, I confess Lady \*\*\*\*\* had that in herself which made her not ready to think the worst of her fellow-women.

"Did you ever hear the history of John Duke of Argyll's marriage, and constant attachment, before and after, to a woman not handsomer or much more elegant than Jeanie Deans, though very unlike her in understanding? I can give it you, if you wish it, for it is at my fingers' ends. Now I am ancient myself, I should be a great treasure of anecdote to anybody who had the same humour,—but I meet with few who have. They read vulgar tales in books, Wrazall, and so forth, what the footmen and maids only gave credit to at the moment, but they desire no further information. I dare swear many of your readers never heard of the Duke of Argyll before. 'Pray, who was Sir Robert Walpole?' they ask me; 'and when did he live?' or, perhaps, 'Was not the great Lord Chatham in Queen Anne's days?'

"We have, to help us, an exemplification on two legs in our country apothecary, whom you have painted over and over without the honour of knowing him; an old, dry, arguing, prosing, obstinate Scotchman, very shrewd, rather sarcastic, a sturdy Whig and Presbyterian, *tyrant un peu sur le democrat*. Your books are birdlime to him, however; he hovers about the house to obtain a volume when others have done with it. I long to ask him whether dounce Davie was any way *sub* to him. He acknowledges he would not *now* go to Muschat's Cairn at night for any money—he had such a horror of it 'sixty years ago' when a laddie. But I am come to the end of my fourth page, and will not tire you with any more scribbling.

"P.S.—If I had known nothing, and the whole world had told me the contrary, I should have found you out in that one parenthesis,—'for the man was mortal, and had been a schoolmaster.'"

This letter was addressed from a great country house in the south, and may, I presume, be accepted as a fair index of the instantaneous English popularity of Jeanie Deans. From the choice of localities, and the splendid blazoning of tragical circumstances that had left the strongest impression on the memory and imagination of every inhabitant, the reception of this tale in Edinburgh was a scene of all-engrossing enthusiasm, such as I never witnessed there on the appearance of any other literary novelty. But the admiration and delight were the same all over Scot-

land. Never before had he seized such really noble features of the national character as were canonized in the person of his homely heroine; no art had ever devised a happier running contrast than that of her and her sister, or interwoven a portraiture of lowly manners and simple virtues with more graceful delineations of polished life, or with bolder shadows of terror, guilt, crime, remorse, madness, and all the agony of the passions.

In the Introduction and notes to the *Heart of Midlothian*, drawn up in 1830, we are presented with details concerning the suggestion of the main plot, and the chief historical incidents made use of, to which I can add nothing of any moment.

The 12th of July restored the author as usual to the supervision of his trees and carpenters; but he had already told the Ballantynes that the story which he had found it impossible to include in the recent series of *Jedediah* should be forthwith taken up as the opening one of a third, and instructed John to embrace the first favourable opportunity of offering Constable the publication of this, on the footing of 10,000 copies again forming the first edition; but now at length without any more stipulations connected with the unfortunate "old stock" of the Hanover Street Company.

Before he settled himself to his work, however, he made a little tour with his wife and children—halting for a few days at Drumlanrig, thence crossing the Border to Carlisle and Rokeby, and returning by way of Alnwick. On the 17th August, he writes thus to John Ballantyne from Drumlanrig:—"This is heavenly weather, and I am making the most of it, as I shall have a laborious autumn before me. I may say of my head and fingers as the farmer of his mare, when he indulged her with extra feed—

" 'Ye ken that Maggie winna sleep  
For that or Simmer.'

"We have taken our own horses with us, and I have my pony, and ride when I find it convenient."

September the 10th, he thus writes by post to James Ballantyne:—

"Abbotsford, September 10th, 1818.

"DEAR JAMES,—

"I am quite satisfied with what has been done as to the London bills. I am glad the presses move. I have been interrupted sadly since my return by tourist gazers: this day a confounded pair of Cambridge boys have robbed me of two good hours, and you of a sheet of copy—though whether a good sheet or no, deponent saith not. The story is a dismal one, and I doubt sometimes whether it will bear working out to much length, after all. Query, if I shall make it so effective in two volumes as my mother does in her quarter of an hour's crack by the fireside. But *nil desperandum*. You shall have a bunch to-morrow or next day—and when the proofs come in, my pen must and shall step out. By-the-bye, I want a supply of pens, and ditto of ink. Adieu for the present, for I must go over to Toffield, to give orders *anent* the dam and the footpath, and see *item* as to what should be done *anent* steps at the Rhymer's Waterfall, which I think may be made to turn out a decent bit of a lion, as would set True Thomas his worth and dignity. Ever yours."

One of his visitors of that month was Mr. R. Cadell, who was of course in all the secrets of the house of Constable; and observing how his host was harassed with lion-hunters, and what a number of hours he spent daily in the company of his workpeople, he expressed, during one of their walks, his wonder that Scott should ever be able to write books at all while in the country. "I know," he said, "that you contrive to get a few hours in your own room, and that may do for the mere pen-work; but when is it that you think?" "Oh," said Scott, "I lie *simmering* over things for an hour or so before I get up, and there's the time I am dressing to overhaul my half-sleeping half-waking *projet de chapitre*, and when I get the paper before me, it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a dose in the plantations, and, while Tom marks out a dyke or drain as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain riggs in some other world."

It was in the month following that I first saw Abbotsford. He invited my friend John Wilson (now Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh) and myself to visit him for a day or two on our return from an excursion to Mr. Wilson's beautiful villa on the Lake of Windermere, but named the particular day (October 8th) on which it would be most convenient for him to receive us; and we discovered on our arrival that he had fixed it from a good-natured motive. We found him walking in one of his plantations, at no great distance from the house, with five or six young people, and his friends Lord Melville and Captain Ferguson. Having presented us to the First Lord of the Admiralty, he fell back a little and said, "I am glad you came to-day, for I thought it might be of use to you both, some time or other, to be known to my old schoolfellow here, who is, and I hope will long continue to be, the great giver of good things in the Parliament House. I trust you have had enough of certain pranks with your friend Ebony, and if so, Lord Melville will have too much sense to remember them."\* We then walked round the plantation, as yet in a very young state, and came back to the house by a formidable work which he was constructing for the defence of his *haugh* against the wintry violences of the Tweed; and he discoursed for some time with keen interest upon the comparative merits of different methods of embankment, but stopped now and then to give us the advantage of any point of view in which his new building on the eminence above pleased his eye. It had a fantastic appearance, being but a fragment of the existing edifice, and not at all harmonizing in its outline with "Mother Reford's" original tenement to the eastward. Scott, however, expatiated *con amore* on the rapidity with which, being chiefly of darkish granite, it was assuming a "time-honoured" aspect. Ferguson, with a grave and respectful look, observed, "Yes, it really has much the air of some old fastness hard by the river Jordan." This allusion to a so-called Chaldee MS., † in the manufacture of which Ferguson fancied Wilson and myself to have had a share, gave rise to a burst of laughter among Scott's merry young folks and their companions, while he himself drew in his

\* *Ebony* was Mr. Blackwood's own usual designation in the *jeux d'esprit* of his young magazine, in many of which the persons thus addressed by Scott were conjoint culprits. They both were then, as may be inferred, sweeping the boards of the Parliament House as "briefless barristers."

† See Blackwood, Oct. 1817.

nether lip, and rebuked the Captain with "Toots, Adam! toots, Adam!" He then returned to his embankment, and described how a former one had been entirely swept away in one night's flood. But the Captain was ready with another verse of the Chaldee MS., and groaned out, by way of echo, "Verily my fine gold hath perished!" Whereupon the "Great Magician" elevated his huge oaken staff as if to lay it on the waggish soldier's back—but flourished it gaily over his own head, and laughed louder than the youngest of the company. As we walked and talked, the Pepper and Mustard terniers kept snuffing about among the bushes and heather near us, and started every five minutes a hare, which scudded away before them and the ponderous staghound Maida; the Sheriff and all his tail holloaing and cheering in perfect confidence that the dogs could do no more harm to poor puss than the venerable tom cat, Hinsie of Hinsfeldt, who pursued the vain chase with the rest.

At length we drew near *Peterhouse*, and found sober Peter himself and his brother-in-law, the facetious factotum Tom Purdie, superintending, pipe in mouth, three or four sturdy labourers busy in laying down the turf for a bowling-green. "I have planted hollies all round it, you see," said Scott, "and laid out an arbour on the right-hand side for the laird; and here I mean to have a game at bowls after dinner every day in fine weather—for I take that to have been among the indispensables of our old *vie de château*." But I must not forget the reason he gave me some time afterwards for having fixed on that spot for his bowling-green. "In truth," he then said, "I wished to have a smooth walk and a canny seat for myself within earshot of Peter's evening psalm." The coachman was a devout Presbyterian, and many a time have I in after years accompanied Scott on his evening stroll, when the principal object was to enjoy, from the bowling-green, the unfailing melody of this good man's family worship, and heard him repeat, as Peter's manly voice led the humble choir within, that beautiful stanza of Burns's *Saturday Night* :—

"They chaunt their artless notes in simple guise;  
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim," &c.

It was near the dinner-hour before we reached the house, and presently I saw assembled a larger company than I should have fancied to be at all compatible with the existing accommodations of the place; but it turned out that Captain Ferguson, and the friends whom I have not as yet mentioned, were to find quarters elsewhere for the night. His younger brother, Captain John Ferguson, of the Royal Navy (a favourite lieutenant of Lord Nelson's), had come over from Huntly Burn; there were present also Mr. Scott of Gala, whose residence is within an easy distance; Sir Henry Hay MacDougal of Mackerstone, an old baronet with gay, lively, and highly polished manners, related in the same degree to both Gala and the Sheriff; Sir Alexander Don, the Member for Roxburghshire, whose elegant social qualities have been alluded to in the preceding chapter; and Dr. Scott of Darnlee, a modest and intelligent gentleman, who having realized a fortune in the East India Company's medical service, had settled within two or three miles of Abbotsford, and though no longer practising his profession, had kindly employed all the resources of his skill in the endeavour to counteract his neighbour's recent

liability to attacks of cramp. Our host and one or two others appeared, as was in those days a common fashion with country gentlemen, in the lieutenant uniform of their county. How fourteen or fifteen people contrived to be seated in the then dining-room of Abbotsford I know not, for it seemed quite full enough when it contained only eight or ten; but so it was—nor, as Sir Harry Macdougall's fat valet, warned by former experience, did not join the train of attendants, was there any perceptible difficulty in the detail of the arrangements. Everything about the dinner was, as the phrase runs, in excellent style; and in particular, the *potage à la Meg Merrilees*, announced as an attempt to imitate a device of the Duke of Buccleuch's celebrated cook—by name Monsieur Florence—seemed, to those at least who were better acquainted with the Kaim of Dornoch than with the *cuisine* of Bowhill,\* a very laudable specimen of the art. The champagne circulated nimbly, and I never was present at a gayer dinner. It had advanced a little beyond the soup when it received an accompaniment which would not, perhaps, have improved the satisfaction of southern guests, had any such been present. A tall and stalwart bagpiper, in complete Highland costume, appeared pacing to and fro on the green before the house, and the window being open, it seemed as if he might as well have been straining his lungs within the parlour. At a pause of his strenuous performance, Scott took occasion to explain that *John of Skye* was a recent acquisition to the rising hamlet of Abbotstown; that the man was a capital hedger and ditcher, and only figured with the pipe and philabeg on high occasions in the after-part of the day; "but, indeed," he added, laughing, "I fear John will soon be discovering that the hook and mattock are unfavourable to his chanter hand." When the cloth was drawn, and the never-failing salver of *quaighs* introduced, John of Skye, upon some well-known signal, entered the room, but *en militaire*, without removing his bonnet, and taking his station behind the landlord, received from his hand the largest of the Celtic bickers brimful of Glenlivet. The man saluted the company in his own dialect, tipped off the contents (probably a quarter of an English pint of raw *aquavite*) at a gulp, wheeled about as solemnly as if the whole ceremony had been a movement on parade, and forthwith recommenced his pibrochs and gatherings, which continued until long after the ladies had left the table, and the autumnal moon was streaming in upon us so brightly as to dim the candles.

I had never before seen Scott in such buoyant spirits as he showed this evening, and I never saw him in higher afterwards; and no wonder, for this was the first time that he, Lord Melville, and Adam Ferguson, daily companions at the High School of Edinburgh, and partners in many joyous scenes of the early volunteer period, had met since the commencement of what I may call the serious part of any of their lives. The great poet and novelist was receiving them under his own roof, when his fame was at its acme, and his fortune seemed culminating to about a corre-

\* I understand that this now celebrated soup was *extemporized* by M. Florence on Scott's first visit to Bowhill after the publication of *Guy Mannering*. Florence had *served*, and Scott having on some sporting party made his personal acquaintance, he used often afterwards to gratify the poet's military propensities by sending up magnificent representations in pastry of citadels taken by the Emperor, &c.

sponding height, and the generous exuberance of his hilarity might have overflowed without moving the spleen of a Cynic. Old stories of *the Yards* and *the Crosscauseway* were relieved by sketches of real warfar, such as none but Ferguson (or Charles Matthews, had he been a soldier) could ever have given; and they toasted the memory of *Greenbreeks* and the health of *the Beau* with equal devotion.

When we rose from table, Scott proposed that we should all ascend his western turret, to enjoy a moonlight view of the valley. The younger part of his company were too happy to do so; some of the seniors, who had tried the thing before, found pretexts for hanging back. The stairs were dark, narrow, and steep; but the Sheriff piloted the way, and at length there were as many on the top as it could well afford footing for. Nothing could be more lovely than the panorama; all the harsher and more naked features being lost in the delicious moonlight; the Tweed and the Gala winding and sparkling beneath our feet; and the distant ruins of Melrose appearing, as if carved of alabaster, under the black mass of the Eildons. The poet, leaning on his battlement, seemed to hang over the beautiful vision as if he had never seen it before. "If I live," he exclaimed, "I will build me a higher tower, with a more spacious platform, and a staircase better fitted for an old fellow's scrambling." The piper was heard re-tuning his instrument below, and he called to him for "Lochaber no more." John of Skye obeyed, and as the music rose, softened by the distance, Scott repeated in a low key the melancholy words of the song of exile.

On descending from the tower, the whole company were assembled in the new dining-room, which was still under the hands of the carpenters, but had been brilliantly illuminated for the occasion. Mr. Bruce took his station, and old and young danced reels to his melodious accompaniment until they were weary, while Scott and the Dominie looked on with gladsome faces, and beat time now and then, the one with his staff, the other with his wooden leg. A tray with mulled wine and whiskey punch was then introduced, and Lord Melville proposed a bumper, with all the honours, to the *Roofree*. Captain Ferguson having sung "Johnnie Cope," called on the young ladies for "Kenmure's on and awa' ;" and our host then insisted that the whole party should join, standing in a circle hand-in-hand *more majorem*, in the hearty chorus of

"Weel may we a' be,  
Ill may we never see,  
God bless the king and the gude companie !"

—which being duly performed, all dispersed. Such was the *handsel*, for Scott protested against its being considered as the *house-heating*, of the new Abbotsford.

When I began this chapter I thought it would be a short one, but it is surprising how, when one digs into his memory, the smallest details of a scene that was interesting at the time shall by degrees come to light again. I now recall, as if I had seen and heard them yesterday, the looks and words of eighteen years ago. Awaking between six and seven next morning, I heard Scott's voice close to me, and looking out of the little latticed window of the then detached cottage called *the chapel*, saw

him and Tom Purdie pacing together on the green before the door, in earnest deliberation over what seemed to be a rude daub of a drawing, and every time they approached my end of their parade I was sure to catch the words *Blue Bank*. It turned out in the course of the day that a field of clay near Toffield went by this name, and that the draining of it was one of the chief operations then in hand. My friend Wilson, meanwhile, who lodged also in the chapel, tapped at my door, and asked me to rise and take a walk with him by the river, for he had some angling project in his head. He went out and joined in the consultation about the Blue Bank, while I was dressing; presently Scott hailed me at the casement, and said he had observed a volume of a new edition of Goethe on my table—would I lend it him for a little? He carried off the volume accordingly, and retreated with it to his den. It contained the *Faust*, and, I believe, in a more complete shape than he had before seen that masterpiece of his old favourite. When we met at breakfast a couple of hours later, he was full of the poem—dwelt with enthusiasm on the airy beauty of its lyrics, the terrible pathos of the scene before the *Mater Dolorosa*, and the deep skill shown in the various subtle shadings of character between Mephistopheles and poor Margaret. He remarked, however, of the Introduction (which I suspect was new to him) that blood would out—that, consummate artist as he was, Goethe was a German, and that nobody but a German would ever have provoked a comparison with the book of Job, “the grandest poem that ever was written.” He added, that he suspected the end of the story had been left *in obscuro*, from despair to match the closing scene of our own Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus. Mr. Wilson mentioned a report that Coleridge was engaged on a translation of the *Faust*. “I hope it is so,” said Scott; “Coleridge made Schiller’s *Wallenstein* far finer than he found it, and so he will do by this. No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion, but he cannot manage them so as to bring out anything of his own on a large scale at all worthy of his genius. He is like a lump of coal rich with gas, which lies expending itself in puffs and gleams, unless some shrewd body will clap it into a cast-iron box, and compel the compressed element to do itself justice. His fancy and diction would have long ago placed him above all his contemporaries, had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and a steady will.\* I don’t now expect a great original poem from Coleridge, but he might easily make a sort of fame for him-

\* In the Introduction to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1830, Sir Walter says, “Were I ever to take the unbecoming freedom of censuring a man of Mr. Coleridge’s extraordinary talents, it would be on account of the caprice and indolence with which he has thrown from him, as in mere wantonness, those unfinished scraps of poetry, which, like the torso of antiquity, defy the skill of his poetical brethren to complete them. The charming fragments which the author abandons to their fate are surely too valuable to be treated like the proofs of careless engravers, the sweepings of whose studios often make the fortune of some painstaking collector.” And in a note to *The Abbot*, alluding to Coleridge’s beautiful and tantalizing fragment of *Christabel*, he adds, “Has not our own imaginative poet cause to fear that future ages will desire to summon him from his place of rest, as Milton longed

“To call up him who left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold!”

self as a poetical translator, that would be a thing completely unique and *sui generis*."

While this criticism proceeded, Scott was cutting away at his brown loaf and a plate of kippered salmon in a style which strongly reminded me of Dandie Dinmont's luncheon at Mump's Hall; nor was his German topic at all the predominant one. On the contrary, the sentences which have dwelt on my memory dropped from him now and then, in the pauses, as it were, of his main talk; for though he could not help recurring, ever and anon, to the subject, it would have been quite out of his way to make any literary matter the chief theme of his conversation when there was a single person present who was not likely to feel much interested in its discussion. How often have I heard him quote on such occasions Mr. Vellum's advice to the butler in Addison's excellent play of *The Drummer*, "Your conjuror, John, is indeed a twofold personage, but he *eats and drinks like other people!*"

I may, however, take this opportunity of observing, that nothing could have been more absurdly unfounded than the statement which I have seen repeated in various sketches of his life and manners, that he habitually abstained from conversation on literary topics. In point of fact, there were no topics on which he talked more openly or more earnestly; but he, when in society, lived and talked for the persons with whom he found himself surrounded, and if he did not always choose to enlarge upon the subjects which his companions for the time suggested, it was simply because he thought or fancied that these had selected, out of deference or flattery, subjects about which they really cared little more than they knew. I have already repeated, over and again, my conviction that Scott considered literature *per se* as a thing of far inferior importance to the high concerns of political or practical life; but it would be too ridiculous to question that literature nevertheless engrossed, at all times and seasons, the greater part of his own interest and reflection; nor can it be doubted, that his general preference of the society of men engaged in the active business of the world, rather than that of so called literary people, was grounded substantially on his feeling that literature, worthy of the name, was more likely to be fed and nourished by the converse of the former than by that of the latter class.

Before breakfast was over the post-bag arrived, and its contents were so numerous that Lord Melville asked Scott what election was on hand, not doubting that there must be some very particular reason for such a shoal of letters. He answered that it was much the same most days, and added, "though no one has kinder friends in the franking line, and though Freeling and Croker especially are always ready to stretch the point of privilege in my favour, I am nevertheless a fair contributor to the revenue, for I think my bill for letters seldom comes under £150 a year; and as to coach parcels, they are a perfect ruination." He then told with high merriment a disaster that had lately befallen him. "One morning last spring," he said, "I opened a huge lump of a despatch, without looking how it was addressed, never doubting that it had travelled under some omnipotent frank like the First Lord of the Admiralty's, when, lo and behold, the contents proved to be a MS. play, by a young lady of New York, who kindly requested me to read and correct it, equip it with pro-

logue and epilogue, procure for it a favourable reception from the manager of Drury Lane, and make Murray or Constable bleed handsomely for the copyright; and on inspecting the cover, I found that I had been charged five pounds odd for the postage. This was bad enough, but there was no help, so I groaned and submitted. A fortnight or so after another packet of not less formidable bulk arrived, and I was absent enough to break its seal too without examination. Conceive my horror when out jumped the same identical tragedy of *The Cherokee Lovers*, with a second epistle from the authoress, stating that, as the winds had been boisterous, she feared the vessel entrusted with her former communication might have foundered, and therefore judged it prudent to forward a duplicate."

Scott said he must retire to answer his letters, but that the sociable and the ponies would be at the door by one o'clock, when he proposed to show Melrose and Dryburgh to Lady Melville and any of the rest of the party that chose to accompany them, adding that his son Walter would lead anybody who preferred a gun to the likeliest place for a blackcock, and that Charlie Purdie (Tom's brother) would attend upon Mr. Wilson and whoever else chose to try a cast of the salmon-rod. He withdrew when all this was arranged, and appeared at the time appointed, with perhaps a dozen letters sealed for the post, and a coach parcel addressed to James Ballantyne, which he dropped at the turnpike gate as we drove to Melrose. Seeing it picked up by a dirty urchin, and carried into a hedge pothouse, where half a dozen nondescript wayfarers were smoking and tipping, I could not but wonder that it had not been the fate of some one of those innumerable packets to fall into unscrupulous hands, and betray the grand secret. That very morning we had seen two post-chaises drawn up at his gate, and the enthusiastic travellers, seemingly decent tradesmen and their families, who must have been packed in a manner worthy of Mrs. Gilpin, lounging about to catch a glimpse of him at his going forth. But it was impossible in those days to pass between Melrose and Abbotsford without encountering some odd figure, armed with a sketch-book, evidently bent on a peep at the Great Unknown; and it must be allowed that many of these pedestrians looked as if they might have thought it very excusable to make prize, by hook or by crook, of a MS. chapter of the *Tales of my Landlord*.

Scott showed us the ruins of Melrose in detail, and as we proceeded to Dryburgh, descanted learnedly and sagaciously on the good effects which must have attended the erection of so many great monastic establishments in a district so peculiarly exposed to the inroads of the English in the days of the Border wars. "They were now and then violated," he said, "as their aspect to this hour bears witness; but for once that they suffered, any lay property similarly situated must have been *harried* a dozen times. The bold Dacres, Liddells, and Howards, that could get easy absolution at York or Durham for any ordinary breach of a truce with the Scots, would have had to *dree a heavy dole* had they confessed plundering from the fat brothers, of the same order perhaps, whose lines had fallen to them on the wrong side of the Cheviot." He enlarged too on the heavy penalty which the Crown of Scotland had paid for its rash acquiescence in the wholesale robbery of the Church at the Reformation. "The proportion of the soil in the hands of the clergy had," he said, "been very

great—too great to be continued. If we may judge by their share in the public burdens, they must have had nearly a third of the land in their possession. But this vast wealth was now distributed among a turbulent nobility, too powerful before; and the Stuarts soon found that in the bishops and lord abbots they had lost the only means of balancing their factions, so as to turn the scale in favour of law and order; and by-and-bye the haughty barons themselves, who had scrambled for the worldly spoil of the Church, found that the spiritual influence had been concentrated in hands as haughty as their own, and connected with no feelings likely to buttress their order any more than the Crown—a new and sterner monkery, under a different name, and essentially plebeian. Presently the Scotch were on the verge of republicanism, in State as well as Kirk, and, I have sometimes thought, it was only the accession of King Jamie to the throne of England that could have given monarchy a chance of prolonging its existence here.” One of his friends asked what he supposed might have been the annual revenue of the Abbey of Melrose in its best day. He answered that he suspected, if all the sources of their income were now in clever hands, the produce could hardly be under £100,000 a year; and added, “making every allowance for modern improvements, there can be no question that the sixty brothers of Melrose divided a princely rental. The superiors were often men of very high birth, and the great majority of the rest were younger brothers of gentlemen’s families. I fancy they may have been, on the whole, pretty near akin to your Fellows of All Souls—who, according to their statute, must be *bone nati, bone vestiti, et mediocriter docti*. They had a good house in Edinburgh, where, no doubt, my lord abbot and his chaplains maintained a hospitable table during the sittings of Parliament.” Some one regretted that we had no lively picture of the enormous revolution in manners that must have followed the downfall of the ancient Church in Scotland. He observed that there were, he fancied, materials enough for constructing such a one, but that they were mostly scattered in records—“of which,” said he, “who knows anything to the purpose except Tom Thomson and John Riddell? It is common to laugh at such researches, but they pay the good brains that meddle with them; and had Thomson been as diligent in setting down his discoveries as he has been in making them, he might, long before this time of day, have placed himself on a level with Ducange or Camden. The change in the country-side,” he continued, “must indeed have been terrific; but it does not seem to have been felt very severely by a certain Boniface of St. Andrews, for when somebody asked him, on the subsidence of the storm, what he thought of all that had occurred. ‘Why,’ answered mine host, ‘it comes to this, that the moderator sits in my meikle chair, where the dean sat before, and in place of calling for the third stoup of Bordeaux, bids Jenny bring ben anither bowl of toddy.’”

At Dryburgh Scott pointed out to us the sepulchral aisle of his Haliburton ancestors, and said he hoped, in God’s appointed time, to lay his bones among their dust. The spot was, even then, a sufficiently interesting and impressive one; but I shall not say more of it at present.

On returning to Abbotsford, we found Mrs. Scott and her daughters doing penance under the merciless curiosity of a couple of tourists who

had arrived from Selkirk soon after we set out for Melrose. They were rich specimens—tall, lanky young men, both of them rigged out in new jackets and trousers of the Macgregor tartan; the one, as they had revealed, being a lawyer, the other a Unitarian preacher, from New England. These gentlemen, when told on their arrival that Mr. Scott was not at home, had shown such signs of impatience, that the servant took it for granted they must have serious business, and asked if they would wish to speak a word with his lady. They grasped at this, and so conducted themselves in the interview, that Mrs. Scott never doubted they had brought letters of introduction to her husband, and invited them accordingly to partake of her luncheon. They had been walking about the house and grounds with her and her daughters ever since that time, and appeared at the porch, when the Sheriff and his party returned to dinner, as if they had been already fairly enrolled on his visiting list. For the moment he too was taken in: he fancied that his wife must have received and opened their credentials, and shook hands with them with courteous cordiality. But Mrs. Scott, with all her overflowing good-nature, was a sharp observer; and she, before a minute had elapsed, interrupted the ecstatic compliments of the strangers, by reminding them that her husband would be glad to have the letters of the friends who had been so good as to write by them. It then turned out that there were no letters to be produced; and Scott, signifying that his hour for dinner approached, added, that as he supposed they meant to walk to Melrose, he could not trespass further on their time. The two lion-hunters seemed quite unprepared for this abrupt escape; but there was about Scott, in perfection, when he chose to exert it, the power of civil repulsion: he bowed the overwhelmed originals to his door, and on re-entering the parlour, found Mrs. Scott complaining very indignantly that they had gone so far as to pull out their note-book, and beg an exact account, not only of his age—but of her own! Scott, already half relenting, laughed heartily at this misery. He observed, however, that, “if he were to take in all the world, he had better put up a sign-post at once—

“Porter, ale, and British spirits,  
Painted bright between two trees;”

“and that no traveller of respectability could ever be at a loss for such an introduction as would ensure his best hospitality.” Still, he was not quite pleased with what had happened, and as we were about to pass, half an hour afterwards, from the drawing-room to the dining-room, he said to his wife, “Hang the Yahoos, Charlotte—but we should have bid them stay dinner.” “Devil a bit,” quoth Captain John Ferguson, who had again come over from Huntly Burn, and had been latterly assisting the lady to amuse her Americans—“devil a bit, my dear, they were quite in a mistake, I could see. The one asked Madame whether she deigned to call her new house Tullyveolan or Tillytudlem; and the other, when Maida happened to lay his nose against the window, exclaimed *pro-di-gious*! In short, they evidently meant all their humbug not for you, but for the culprit of Waverley, and the rest of that there rubbish.” “Well, well, Skipper,” was the reply, “for a’ that, the loons would hae been nane the waur o’ their hail.”

From this banter it may be inferred that the younger Ferguson had not as yet been told the Waverley secret, which to any of that house could never have been any mystery. Probably this, or some similar occasion soon afterwards, led to his formal initiation; for during the many subsequent years that the veil was kept on, I used to admire the tact with which, when in their topmost high-jinks humour, both "Captain John" and "The Auld Captain" eschewed any the most distant allusion to the affair.

And thus reminds me that, at the period of which I am writing, none of Scott's own family, except, of course, his wife, had the advantage in that matter of the Skipper. Some of them, too, were apt, like him, so long as no regular confidence had been reposed in them, to avail themselves of the author's reserve for their own sport among friends. Thus one morning, just as Scott was opening the door of the parlour, the rest of the party being already seated at the breakfast-table, the Dominie was in the act of helping himself to an egg, marked with a peculiar hieroglyphic by Mrs. Thomas Purdie, upon which Anne Scott, then a lively rattling girl of sixteen, lisped out, "That's a mysterious-looking egg, Mr. Thomson—what if it should have been meant for the *Great Unknown*?" Ere the Dominie could reply, her father advanced to the foot of the table, and having seated himself and deposited his stick on the carpet beside him, with a sort of whispered whistle, "What's that Lady Anne's\* saying?" quoth he. "I thought it had been well known that the *keelavined* egg must be a soft one for the *Sherra*?" And so he took his egg, and while we all smiled in silence, poor Anne said gaily in the midst of her blushes, "Upon my word, papa, I thought Mr. John Ballantyne might have been expected." This allusion to Johnny's glory in being considered as the accredited representative of Jedediah Cleishbotham produced a laugh, at which the Sheriff frowned, and then laughed too.

I remember nothing particular about our second day's dinner, except that it was then I first met my dear and honoured friend, William Laidlaw. The evening passed rather more quietly than the preceding one. Instead of the dance in the new dining-room, we had a succession of old ballads sung to the harp and guitar by the young ladies of the house; and Scott, when they seemed to have done enough, found some reason for taking down a volume of Crabbe, and read us one of his favourite tales—

"Grave Jonas Kindred, Sybil Kindred's s're,  
Was six feet high, and looked six inches higher," &c.

But jollity revived in full vigour when the supper-tray was introduced; and to cap all merriment, Captain Ferguson dismissed us with the *Laird of Cockpen*. Lord and Lady Melville were to return to Melville Castle next morning, and Mr. Wilson and I happened to mention that we were engaged to dine and sleep at the seat of my friend and relation, Mr. Pringle of Torwoodlee, on our way to Edinburgh. Scott immediately

\* When playing in childhood with the young ladies of the Buccleuch family, she had been overheard saying to her namesake, Lady Anne Scott, "Well, I do wish I were Lady Anne too—it is so much prettier than Miss;" thenceforth she was commonly addressed in the family by the coveted title.

said that he would send word in the morning to the laird that he and Adam Ferguson meant to accompany us, such being the uncereemonious style in which country neighbours in Scotland visit each other. Next day accordingly we all rode over together to Mr. Pringle's beautiful seat—the "distant Torwoodlee" of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, but distant not above five or six miles from Abbotsford—coursing hares as we proceeded, but inspecting the antiquities of the *Catrail* to the interruption of our sport. We had another joyous evening at Torwoodlee. Scott and Ferguson returned home at night, and the morning after, as Wilson and I mounted for Edinburgh, our kind old host, his sides still sore with laughter, remarked that "the Sheriff and the Captain together were too much for any company."

There was much talk between the Sheriff and Mr. Pringle about the Selkirkshire Yeomanry Cavalry, of which the latter had been the original commandant. Young Walter Scott had been for a year or more cornet in the corps, and his father was consulting Torwoodlee about an entertainment which he meant to give them on his son's approaching birthday. It was then that the new dining-room was to be first *heated* in good earnest; and Scott very kindly pressed Wilson and myself at parting to return for the occasion, which, however, we found it impossible to do.

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